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14. ABSTRACT This study is one component of the Special Operations Forces (SOF) Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project. The larger study consisted of 23 focus groups conducted across the SOF community and an issue-oriented web-based survey. This report describes SOF operators' and leaders' opinions about the barriers that operators encounter in the language acquisition and maintenance process. Survey and focus group results indicated that SOF operators and leaders agreed that the top three barriers are 1) time/operations tempo (OPTEMPO), 2) competing training requirements, and 3) deployments outside SOF operators' area of responsibility (AOR). Each of these barriers can affect SOF operators' proficiency in their required AOR language by 1) promoting language skill decay, 2) reducing the quality and effectiveness of language training, or 3) inhibiting acquisition or maintenance activities. SOF operators and leaders provided suggestions for reducing or removing these barriers, including 1) protecting or mandating language training time, 2) setting priorities for training requirements, 3) recognizing the importance of language, and 4) holding SOF operators and leaders accountable for language proficiency.					
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Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment: Barriers to Language Acquisition and Maintenance



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) states the need for Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators to develop and maintain the language capability needed to meet their language-related mission requirements (USSOCOM M350-8). Language capability plays an important role in SOF operators' mission success (*Inside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report #2010011010; *Outside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report #2010011011).

“So at the time I’m not a mission asset because I can’t ask people’s names or anything else like that. So I’m basically just standing with, you know, the women and children that have been gathered together to keep them out of the way so they don’t get hurt. So I’m just standing there and there’s nothing I can say to them. I can’t gather any more information; I can’t ask for the name of the person that we’re looking for; I can’t ask if there are any bad guys that have come in the area. So at that point I’m just becoming a security guard of women and children and I’m a no-value asset to the mission.”

SOF Operator, 95th Civil Affairs (CA) Brigade (Bde)

Although important, language capability is challenging to acquire and maintain. Language learning requires dedicated, consistent training time and a commitment to language training at all levels of the organization. This report identifies barriers that inhibit SOF operators from acquiring or maintaining language proficiency from the perspective of SOF community members, so that SOF leaders and policymakers can develop plans to reduce or eliminate these barriers.

Each of the barriers discussed in this report can affect SOF operators' proficiency in their required AOR language by 1) promoting language skill decay; 2) reducing the quality and effectiveness of language training; or 3) inhibiting acquisition or maintenance activities.

SOF operators and leaders rated six barriers¹ on the extent to which they inhibit SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance. These barriers were identified in focus group discussions with SOF personnel. SOF operators and leaders agreed that 1) time/operations tempo (OPTEMPO), 2) competing training requirements, and 3) deployments outside SOF operators' area of responsibility (AOR) are *moderate to considerable* barriers to language acquisition and maintenance. OPTEMPO, described as the “pace of military operations” (Castro & Adler, 1999, p. 87), influences SOF operators' training and deployment schedules after initial SOF language training. These increased operations may include deployments outside their AOR or an increase in other training requirements that compete with language training. For example, an outside AOR deployment may require pre-deployment language training for the language used in the deployment region; however, the pre-deployment training may also involve physical and combat training as well as logistical preparation and mission rehearsal. This leaves little time to sufficiently learn the new language or to maintain their primary AOR language.

¹ The six barriers presented on the survey were (in order of survey presentation): Resource availability, time/OPTEMPO, lack of command support, competing training requirements, outside AOR deployments, and lack of personal interest.

Although not rated as one of the top three barriers, SOF operators and leaders considered lack of command support to be a *slight* to *moderate* barrier and frequently discussed this barrier in survey comments (Section II) and focus groups (Section III). Specifically, focus group participants described their command's low prioritization of language in comparison with other training requirements.

Participant A: *"Even when I went through this initial training piece, I was still at duties at the squadron. I was the only guy at my specialty there, only guy that was doing some of these additional duties. So I would spend six hours in language, and then I'd have to go for another three or four to work and try to tidy all that stuff up. So my mind wasn't always on the language. And even I had to cut language classes short to take care of my squadron duties."*

Participant B: *"And they'd be able to pull you out of language if they needed you sometimes. Even if you were in a program, 'Hey, we need you to fly on Tuesday.' 'I'm in language.' 'Well, you're going to fly because the flying is more important.'"*

Focus Group Participants, AFSOC

Lack of command prioritization for language was also discussed in another *Tier I* report (*Grading the Chain of Command*, Technical Report #2010011006) and has been a recurrent theme in many of the *Tier I* issue reports.

Resource availability was rated as a *slight* to *moderate* barrier, which was considered less of a barrier than time/OPTEMPO, competing training requirements, and outside AOR deployments. However, survey comments provided by SOF operators and leaders suggest that SOF operators may not have enough language training opportunities (e.g., immersion). Further, higher barrier ratings for resource availability by 19th SFG and 20th SFG respondents confirms that United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Reserve/National Guard units lack language learning resources more so than the active duty USASOC units. Two other *Tier I* reports, *Leader Perspectives on Resources* (Technical Report #2010011025b) and *Language Resources & Self-Study* (Technical Report #2010011021) presents perspectives of SOF operators and leaders regarding language resource availability across the SOF community.

SOF operators and leaders differed in the extent to which lack of personal interest and lack of command support were perceived as barriers to language acquisition and maintenance. SOF operators perceived lack of command support as more of a barrier, while SOF leaders perceived it as less of a barrier. Alternatively, SOF leaders reported SOF operators' lack of personal interest is more of a barrier, while SOF operators perceived it as less of a barrier.

Comments provided by SOF operators and leaders identified additional barriers that prevent or inhibit language acquisition and maintenance, including: lack of funding for language training or language

learning resources; lack of effective incentives to acquire and maintain language proficiency; and language aptitude not reflected in language assignment.

Some SOF operators commented that language training is not adequately funded to be accessible and effective for SOF operators to develop and maintain their language skills.

“But guys that don’t get immersion, I’ve gone back, I’ve asked them, said, ‘Well, we don’t have money for that right now; we’re unable to do it.’”

Focus Group Participant, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC)

SOF operators also commented that the current monetary incentive for achieving and maintaining language proficiency, the Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB), is not motivating (*Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus*, Technical Report #2010011022; *Non-monetary Incentives*, Technical Report #2010011023), or that qualification standards for obtaining this incentive are too difficult.

Discussions regarding language aptitude not reflected in language assignment centered around SOF operators’ placement into languages that are too difficult or too easy for their language aptitude, or being placed into languages that will not be used in the near future due to the frequency of outside AOR deployments.

“I think language assignment, it seems like there’s a blind monkey throwing darts. If your DLAB score is a 68 and you get Korean...literally, that’s your language, go. I got a 115, and I got Indonesian, the easiest Asian language there is.”

Focus Group Participant, 19th Special Forces Group (SFG)

In addition to identifying barriers to SOF operators’ language acquisition and maintenance, SOF operators and leaders estimated the extent to which SOF operators would engage in language acquisition and maintenance, and the extent to which SOF leaders would encourage their SOF operators to engage in language acquisition and maintenance, if these barriers were removed. Overall, SOF operators and leaders reported they (or their unit) would engage in language acquisition and maintenance *every week* if all barriers were removed. This indicates that SOF operators intend to engage in language learning if inhibiting factors are removed.

SOF operators and leaders also provided suggestions for removing barriers, including:

- Protect or mandate language training time
- Set priorities for training requirements
- Recognize importance of language
- Hold SOF operators and leaders accountable for language proficiency
- Tie proficiency to promotion
- Hire more people (e.g., support elements) to deal with high OPTEMPO
- Increase funding for language training
- Integrate language into other training
- Conduct formal language training away from unit

Another *Tier I* report, *Considering Language in the Promotion Process* (Technical Report #2010011043), documents SOF operators' and leaders' opinions on whether language proficiency should be a higher consideration in the SOF promotion process.

A *Tier II* report, *Incentives/Barriers*, focuses on major incentives and barriers to language acquisition and maintenance and provides recommendations for eliminating barriers, and increasing motivation to overcome barriers. The *Tier II* report integrates findings from this report and other *Tier I* reports: *Grading the Chain of Command*, *Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus*, *Non-monetary Incentives*, *Considering Language in the Promotion Process*, and *Force Motivation for Language*.

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SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report identifies barriers that Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators and leaders perceive as preventing SOF operators from acquiring and maintaining foreign language proficiency. This report also presents the frequency with which SOF operators would engage in language acquisition and maintenance if these barriers were removed. Survey comments and focus group discussions illustrate how these barriers inhibit language learning for SOF operators.

Each of the barriers discussed in this report can affect SOF operators' proficiency in their required AOR language by 1) promoting language skill decay; 2) reducing the quality and effectiveness of language training; or 3) inhibiting acquisition or maintenance activities.

Language skill decay—the loss of language skills over time—occurs any time there is a time gap between language learning opportunities. For example, between initial language training and using the language on deployment, SOF operators may not receive formal language training and may not engage in language self-study due to other training requirements. This can cause SOF operators to lose the language skills acquired during initial training, reducing return on investment for that training. The time between language learning opportunities can be extended due to high operations tempo (OPTEMPO), competing training requirements, and/or outside AOR deployments. Additionally, if the unit does not offer sustainment/enhancement training (SET), then the only opportunity for operators to maintain or enhance their proficiency would be through self-study (*Language Resources & Self-Study*, Technical Report #2010011021 provides more information about this topic). Given the difficulty level of foreign language as a skill, it is highly perishable, which means periodic maintenance and use are required. Anything that prevents that is a barrier.

Resource availability and competing training requirements can also affect language training effectiveness and quality. If training is not supported with language learning resources, then SOF operators may not receive the materials necessary to develop and maintain their language skills. Additionally, competing training requirements and other collateral duties can cause SOF operators to be pulled from language training. This can compromise the training's effectiveness because students may miss important information that may not be reviewed when they return to class. It also signals that language training is not very important and not worth personal investment (*Grading the Chain of Command*, Technical Report #2010011006).

There are many policies that might unintentionally inhibit language acquisition and maintenance activities, such as the SOF promotion policy. Currently, language proficiency is not a requirement in the SOF promotion process. Therefore, SOF operators are likely to engage in other training that is more highly weighted in the promotion process (e.g., jumpmaster school) to increase their chances of earning a promotion. Additionally, because language is not included in the promotion process, it may be perceived as a less important SOF skill than other skills that are included. For more information about SOF operator and SOF leader perspectives regarding the consideration of language in the promotion process, please see *Considering Language in the Promotion Process* (Technical Report #2010011043).

Lack of command support was identified as a barrier to language acquisition and maintenance by another 2009 *SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA)* report (*Grading the Chain of Command*, Technical Report #2010011006). Command support for language can influence how language training is prioritized in relation to other training requirements and, therefore, how much time is dedicated to language training, the amount of funding provided to language training, and language resources allocated to the unit.

SOF operators' lack of personal interest in learning the required or official AOR language can also be a barrier to their language acquisition and maintenance. If SOF operators are not interested in learning the language, they may be less likely to engage in initial acquisition training (IAT), to seek SET opportunities, and to engage in self-study (*Force Motivation for Language*, Technical Report #2010011044 details SOF operator motivation and interest in learning foreign language).

Section II of this report presents SOF operator and leader perceptions of the extent to which six barriers inhibits SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance and the extent to which SOF operators would engage in language acquisition and maintenance if the barriers were removed. Section III presents quotes from focus group discussions that illustrate how these barriers inhibit a SOF operator's ability to language train. Section IV presents SOF operator and leader suggestions about how to remove these barriers. Section V integrates findings from Sections II, III, and IV and presents conclusions and next steps for SOF leaders and policymakers. Appendix A (pp. 33-34) details the 2009 *SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) Project*, and Appendix B (pp. 35-37) provides an overview of report methodology, including participants, measures, and analyses. Appendix C (pp. 38-43) presents SOF operator and leader responses by SOF component [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Naval Special Warfare (WARCOM), United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)]. Appendix D (pp. 44-51) presents SOF operator and leader responses by USASOC unit [e.g., 4th Military Information Support Groups (MISG)², 95th Civil Affairs (CA) Brigade (Bde), 1st Special Forces Group (SFG), etc.]. Appendix E (pp. 52-69) presents SOF operator and leader responses within USASOC unit. Appendix F (pp. 70-72) presents comment code themes, definitions, and exemplar comments.

LCNA Project Purpose

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) commissioned the 2009 *SOF LCNA Project* to gain insights on language and culture capability, and issues across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The goal of this organizational-level needs assessment is to inform strategy and policy to ensure SOF personnel have the language and culture skills needed to conduct their missions effectively. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including SOF operators and leaders. Findings, gathered via focus groups and a web-based survey, were determined in a series of reports divided into three tiers. The specific reports in each of these tiers will be determined and contracted by the SOFLO. *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings

² Formerly referred to as Psychological Operations Group (PSYOP)

across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*), while including additional data and analysis on the topic. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., AFSOC, Special Forces (SF) Command]. Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project.

Relationship of *Barriers to Language Acquisition and Maintenance* to the LCNA Project

Barriers to Language Acquisition and Maintenance is a *Tier I* report that will be integrated with other *Tier I* reports—*Command Support for Language: Grading the Chain of Command*, *Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus*, *Non-monetary Incentives*, *Considering Language in the Promotion Process*, and *Force Motivation for Language*—into a *Tier II* report, *Incentives/Barriers* (Appendix A, pp. 33-34, presents the report structure). However, the final reports produced will be determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

SECTION II: BARRIERS TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION & MAINTENANCE

SOF operators and leaders rated six barriers on the extent each inhibits SOF operators from acquiring or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language. SOF operators and leaders explained how these barriers inhibit language learning via open-ended survey comments and focus group discussions. Additionally, SOF operators and leaders indicated how often they (or SOF operators in their unit)³ would engage in language learning and maintenance if all barriers were removed.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- What are the biggest barriers to language acquisition and maintenance?
- Do barriers differ across relevant subgroups (e.g., SOF components, USASOC units)?
- If all barriers were removed, how often would SOF operators engage in language learning and maintenance?

Main Findings

SOF operators and leaders agreed that the most substantial barriers to SOF operators' language acquisition and/or maintenance are 1) time/OPTempo, 2) competing training requirements, and 3) outside AOR deployments (Table 1, p. 13), most frequently rating them as *moderate* to *extreme* barriers. Ratings for these barriers were similar across SOF components and USASOC units. These three barriers are related in that the current operational environment increases OPTempo and, subsequently, increases deployments resulting in more training requirements (i.e., pre-deployment training requirements).

SOF operators and leaders perceived resource availability as less of a barrier, rating it as a *slight* to *moderate barrier*. Comments indicate that SOF operators would like to receive immersion training opportunities and additional language learning resources. Looking across USASOC units, SOF personnel from 19th SFG and 20th SFG rated resource availability as more of a barrier than other USASOC units (e.g., 1st SFG, 3rd SFG). This confirms that the Reserve/National Guard units may have less access to resources when compared to active duty USASOC units.

In terms of rank ordering of barriers, SOF operators and leaders provided similar ratings; however, they differed on perceived lack of command support and lack of personal interest as barriers to SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance. SOF operators perceived lack of command support as more of a barrier than SOF leaders. Alternatively, SOF leaders perceived lack of personal interest as more of a barrier than SOF operators.

Lack of command support was frequently illustrated as a barrier in open-ended survey comments provided by SOF operators. Specifically, operators commented that command's low prioritization of

³ Wording in parentheses reflects wording for the leader item.

language leads to lack of resources needed for language learning and SOF operators studying during non-duty hours because language training time is not protected by their immediate command. Section III presents focus group quotes that illustrate these points.

In focus group discussion and open-ended survey comments, SOF operators and leaders identified additional barriers to language acquisition and maintenance, including 1) lack of funding for language training or language learning resources, 2) language aptitude not reflected in language assignment, and 3) lack of effective incentives.

Lack of funding:

- *“But guys that don’t get immersion, I’ve gone back, I’ve asked them, said, ‘Well, we don’t have money for that right now; we’re unable to do it.’”* Focus Group Participant, AFSOC
- *“Money for the schools is just not readily available.”* SOF Operator, Deployed SO unit

Language aptitude not reflected in language assignment:

- *“I think language assignment, it seems like there’s a blind monkey throwing darts. If your DLAB score is a 68 and you get Korean...literally, that’s your language, go. I got a 115, and I got Indonesian, the easiest Asian language there is.”* Focus Group Participant, 19th SFG

Lack of effective incentives:

- *“If you made language profanely equal to say that of being Airborne people would care a lot more. Those who get paid should have to demonstrate the ability to use that language or lose their pay.”* SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Overall, SOF operators and leaders indicated that they (or their unit) would engage in language acquisition/maintenance *every week* if all barriers were removed. This suggests that SOF operators and leaders understand the importance of language training, but are limited by barriers.

Detailed Findings

SOF operators and leaders agreed that the biggest barriers to SOF operators’ acquisition and/or maintenance of their current official or required AOR language are 1) time/OPTempo, 2) competing training requirements, and 3) outside AOR deployments (Table 1, p. 13). These three barriers were rated as at least *moderate* barriers and their rank order in relation to other barriers was mostly consistent across SOF components and USASOC units.⁴ However, SOF operators and leaders differed in their ratings of lack of command support and lack of personal interest (Table 1, p. 13). SOF leaders perceived lack of personal interest to be more of a barrier than lack of command support and SOF operators perceived lack of command support to be more of a barrier than lack of personal interest.

⁴ Other SOF organizations (e.g., AFSOC, MARSOC, and WARCOC) did not have sufficient sample size to present separately in this report.

SOF operator and leader survey comments illustrate how these barriers can influence language acquisition and maintenance (Table 2, p. 14). Exemplar comments and more detailed findings (e.g., group differences) related to each barrier rated in the survey are presented in the remainder of this section.

Table 1. Barriers to Language Acquisition and/or Maintenance

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	SOF operators	968	3.92	7%	5%	21%	25%	42%
	SOF leaders	743	4.23*	3%	5%	11%	26%	54%
Competing training requirements	SOF operators	966	3.53	11%	8%	28%	22%	30%
	SOF leaders	742	3.88*	7%	8%	15%	30%	40%
Outside AOR deployments	SOF operators	961	3.11	21%	11%	27%	18%	23%
	SOF leaders	739	3.10	22%	13%	19%	23%	22%
Lack of command support	SOF operators	959	2.44*	34%	16%	30%	12%	8%
	SOF leaders	737	2.21	40%	21%	22%	11%	6%
Resource availability	SOF operators	965	2.23	37%	19%	32%	9%	3%
	SOF leaders	739	2.44*	28%	25%	27%	14%	5%
Lack of personal interest	SOF operators	963	1.98	47%	20%	25%	6%	3%
	SOF leaders	738	2.42*	31%	2%	29%	16%	22%

Note. Items are presented in descending order by overall average across SOF operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between SOF operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Table 2. Survey Comment Theme Frequencies

Theme	Overall	SOF operators	SOF leaders
Time/OPTempo	73	31	42
Competing training requirements	67	35	32
Lack of command support	56	27	29
Resource availability	22	9	13
Outside AOR deployments	20	9	11
Lack of incentive	9	3	6
Difficulty learning language	3	1	2
General other comments	49	14	35

Note. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments. Number of SOF operator comments = 140. Number of SOF leader comments = 165. SOF operator comment rate: $140/966 = 14\%$. SOF leader comment rate: $165/740 = 22\%$.

Time/OPTempo and Competing Training Requirements

Overall, SOF operators and leaders agreed that time/OPTempo and competing training requirements were the biggest barriers to SOF operators' language acquisition and/or maintenance. Both groups most frequently rated these as *considerable* or *extreme* barriers. There were no rating differences across SOF components, which indicate that many SOF operators, regardless of assignment, encounter these issues when acquiring or maintaining language.

There was a rating difference for time/OPTempo across USASOC units, such that 4th Military Information Support Group (MISG) operators and leaders reported that time/OPTempo was less of a barrier ($M = 3.37$) than other USASOC units (e.g., 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 10th SFG; Appendix D, pp. 44-51).

Additionally, there was a rating difference for competing training requirements across USASOC units, such that SOF operators from 5th SFG reported that competing training requirements are more of a barrier ($M = 3.84$) than SOF operators from 4th MISG ($M = 3.24$) and 7th SFG ($M = 3.02$).

Differences across leadership's levels of command (e.g., O3, O4, etc.) were explored because these groups may have differing familiarity with language training, such that SOF leaders at the lower levels of command may have more involvement with language training than those at higher levels. Differences were found such that SOF leaders at an O8 level of command reported that competing training requirements were less of a barrier ($M = 3.38$, $n = 40$) than SOF leaders at O3 ($M = 4.07$, $n = 215$) and O4 ($M = 4.12$, $n = 176$) command levels. This can be explained because O3s and O4s may be more familiar with training schedules than O8s, who have other, higher-level responsibilities.

SOF operators' survey comments illustrate how time/OPTempo and competing training requirements can inhibit language acquisition and/or maintenance (Table 2, p. 14), the most common comment theme.

"Because of the current Op Temp and deployment schedule, it is nearly impossible to have a soldier try and maintain language proficiency and also complete all administrative tasks and training required for deployments."

SOF Operator, 5th SFG

"While there is command emphasis on taking the DLPT annually, a command desire to see soldiers maintain higher proficiencies, and an excellent language facility, there is almost no time to use the facility and still maintain a somewhat normal life while not deployed. With the OPTempo being as high as it is for missions both inside and outside of our assigned AORs, language training falls by the wayside..."

SOF Operator, TRADOC

"Time is a limited resource. Time is the main roadblock. Please consider that it's a zero sum game and that if more time is allocated to language, less time will have to be allocated to other requirements."

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

"It's tough. You have to do what you can to prepare for deployment. Language isn't mandatory so it gets cut when time gets short."

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Outside AOR Deployments

In addition to time/OPTempo and competing training requirements, SOF operators and leaders agreed that outside AOR deployments are a *moderate* ($M = 3.11$, $n = 961$) barrier to SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance. There was one rating difference between USASOC leaders and TSOC leaders, such that USASOC leaders reported outside AOR deployments to be more of a barrier ($M = 3.21$, $n = 457$) than TSOC leaders ($M = 2.49$, $n = 49$).

Differences were also found across some USASOC units. SOF operators and leaders from 5th SFG reported that outside AOR deployments are less of a barrier than SOF operators and leaders from 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 7th SFG, and 10th SFG. This is understandable because 5th SFG's AOR includes locations where many deployments currently occur; therefore, they are not frequently deploying outside their AOR.

Although there were not as many comments about this barrier, SOF operators and leaders explained how outside AOR deployments can inhibit language acquisition and maintenance because SOF operators need to learn the language used in their deployment location instead of attending to their required AOR language:

"Everyone knows that there is almost no chance that they will deploy to a place where they will need to use their language unless it is Arabic or Pashtun. For this reason there

is almost no consideration for learning the language or placing people in jobs that coordinate with their language. People are assigned according to competence, but not language compatibility.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

“My language does not apply to the OIF or OEF theaters. Given the limited time I have in between deployments, I won't waste valuable training days studying my language.”

SOF Operator, USSOCOM

“It is nearly impossible to maintain proficiency in my target language while preparing to deploy outside the PACOM AOR and attempt to learn a new language.”

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Resource Availability

Overall, SOF operators and leaders indicated that resource availability is less of a barrier than time/OPTEMPO, competing training requirements, and outside AOR deployments. SOF leaders indicated that resource availability is more of a barrier ($M = 2.44$, $n = 739$) than SOF operators ($M = 2.23$, $n = 965$).

Differences in ratings were found across USASOC units, such that SOF operators and leaders from 19th SFG (SOF operators: $M = 3.33$, $n = 12$; SOF leaders: $M = 3.50$, $n = 6$) and SOF leaders from 20th SFG ($M = 4.00$, $n = 8$) reported that resource availability was more of a barrier than other Army SOF groups (e.g., 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, 7th SFG, 10th SFG, 4th MISG, SWCS Staff; see Appendix D, pp. 44-51). These findings confirm that the Reserve/National Guard SF units, 19th SFG and 20th SFG, have less access to resources when compared to active USASOC units. Overall, 5th SFG reported that resource availability was the *least* significant barrier among all represented USASOC units, which suggests that 5th SFG has resources available for their SOF operators.

SOF leaders at higher levels of command (e.g., O8s and O10s) had differing perspectives about barriers than SOF leaders at lower command levels. Specifically, SOF leaders at an O10 level of command reported that resource availability was more of a barrier ($M = 3.21$, $n = 33$) than SOF leaders from an O3 ($M = 2.47$, $n = 214$), O4 ($M = 2.14$, $n = 175$), or O8 ($M = 2.28$, $n = 39$) command level.

SOF operator and leader comments about language learning resource availability referred to the desire for more language learning resources and immersion opportunities.

“There is emphasis across the board for language training. The problem is commitment of appropriate resources to support the emphasis.”

SOF Operator, “Other” SOF component

“Provide every operator with an ASUS 1005HA netbook, windows 7, MS Office, Rosetta Stone, SEAL Source Rating Material installed.”

SOF Operator, WARCOM

Lack of Command Support

SOF operators indicated that lack of command support was more of a barrier ($M = 2.44$, $n = 959$) than SOF leaders ($M = 2.21$, $n = 737$). Differences were also found across USASOC units, such that SOF operators from 95th CA Bde reported that lack of command support was more of a barrier ($M = 2.76$, $n = 134$) than SOF operators from 3rd SFG ($M = 2.11$, $n = 79$) and 20th SFG ($M = 1.86$, $n = 29$).

Comments related to lack of command support indicate that some SOF leaders may not adequately emphasize the importance of language and, therefore, prioritize it lower than other training requirements.

“...Language training is something that at all my commands just needs to get done to check the block for that commander. There is no real importance placed on this training. Again, it's just check the block.”

SOF Operator, 10th SFG

“Only when the CoC determines that the effectiveness of the individuals being deployed is critical to the mission success, will they mandate language training and demand language proficiency.”

SOF Operator, “Other” SOF component

“The only time language is important is when a slide on language abilities must be briefed to higher...”

SOF Operator, USSOCOM

“My biggest barriers were at the team level. The OIC and NCOIC were almost anti-language unless you were already highly skilled in languages. They did not encourage on duty learning.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Lack of personal interest

Lack of personal interest was the lowest rated barrier by both SOF operators and leaders. However, SOF leaders indicated that lack of personal interest was more of a barrier ($M = 2.42$, $n = 738$) than SOF operators ($M = 1.98$, $n = 963$). Survey comments provided by SOF operators and leaders did not elaborate on this barrier.

Other Barriers

SOF operators and leaders had the opportunity to provide one additional barrier that was not included on the survey and rate it using the same 5-point barrier scale (1 = *Not a barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*). Many respondents provided a rating but did not indicate the barrier they were rating. For those who reported the barrier they were rating, SOF operators most often rated their barrier as a *considerable barrier* and SOF leaders most often rated their barrier as a *considerable barrier* to *extreme barrier*. Verbatim responses are provided below (Table 4, p. 18).

Table 4. Additional Barriers Provided by Respondents

SOF operators	SOF leaders
“Personal ability” “not in a deploying org” “lack of ability” “No Immersion Opportunities” “not in the right unit for language use” “administrative requirements” “out of time for this” “lack of incentive professional or financial” “Money for the National Guard Teams” “We don't deploy enough to our AOR for the command to make it a priority” “Arabic is very difficult”	“Language retraining is nonexistent” “Lack of high initial training” “Lack of instructors” “The average individual's language aptitude” “USSOCOM has a training program for language?” “FLPB 2/2/2 Standard” “Language difficulty” “Not required here” “lack of IAT in AOR language” “MI personnel not required to have a language. This is an institutional or organizational barrier” “Language play no role in day to day duties” “Language Difficulty” “Taskings” “Not viewed as a priority at the Command level, but more for the subordinate commands.” “Formal Training” “Lack of LET opportunities” “Tired” “Money” “Competing Taskers” “The standard was set for the current status.” “lack of incentives”

Additional barriers mentioned SOF operator and leader survey comments included perceived lack of incentive and language aptitude not reflected in language assignment, which was also brought up in focus group discussions.

Comments about lack of incentive:

“If you made language proficiency equal to say that of being Airborne people would care a lot more.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Comments about language aptitude not reflected in language assignment:

“I have a lack of ability and have had very little results from extensive efforts to improve my language ability”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

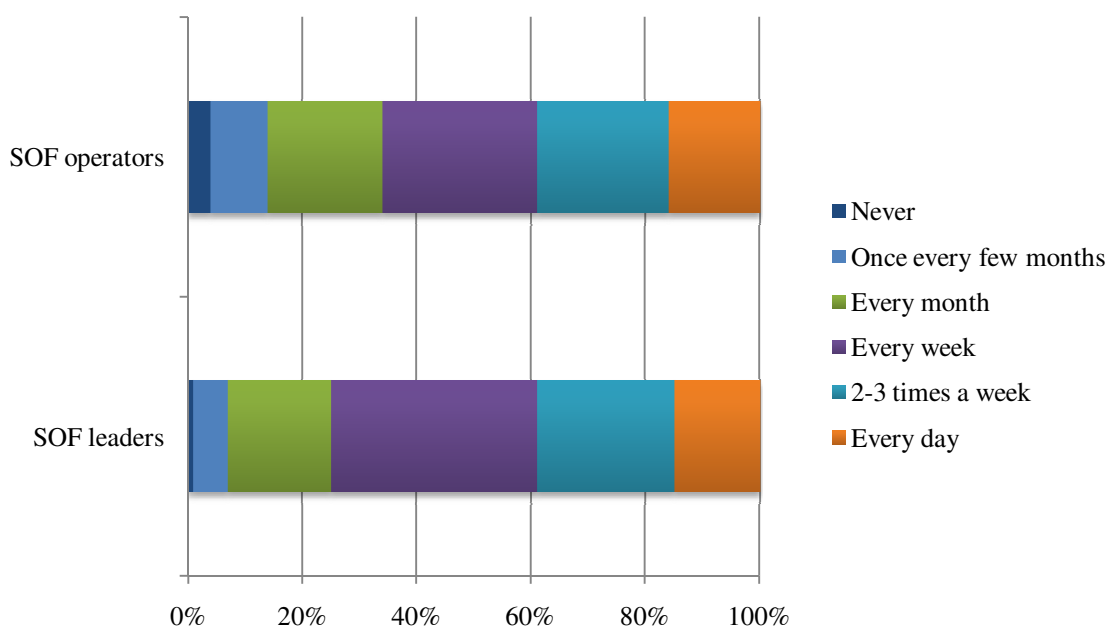
“Language training is mentally taxing and draining and long-term in duration requiring great investment. Most folks, SOF operators, are not scholastic focused which is the administrative in nature and boring.”

SOF Leader, USAJFKSWCS Staff

Removing Barriers

Overall, SOF operators and leaders indicated that they (or operators in their unit) would engage in language acquisition/maintenance *every week* if all barriers were removed; however, there was variability in responses across SOF operators and leaders (Figure 1, p. 19).

Figure 1. Time SOF Operators Would Spend Acquiring or Maintaining Language if Barriers Removed



Note. SOF operators: $M = 4.19$, $n = 980$; SOF leaders: $M = 4.19$, $n = 724$. Responses were made on the following scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Once every few months, 3 = Every month, 4 = Every week, 5 = 2-3 times a week, 6 = Every day.

One slight difference was found between MARSOC and USASOC operators, such that MARSOC operators reported that they would spend more time in language acquisition/maintenance if all barriers were removed ($M = 5.58$, $n = 12$) than USASOC operators ($M = 4.10$, $n = 711$).

Differences were found across USASOC units, such that 4th MISG operators reported that they would spend more time in language acquisition/maintenance than SOF operators from 1st SFG, 3rd SFG, 5th SFG, and 10th SFG. Furthermore, SOF operators from 95th CA Bde reported that they would spend more time in language acquisition/maintenance than SOF operators from 1st SFG and 3rd SFG. These differences are expected because Military Information Support Operations (MISO) and Civil Affairs Operations (CAO) missions require higher language proficiency than many SF missions.

SECTION III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

SOF operator focus group discussions described how barriers can inhibit language acquisition and maintenance, particularly how outside AOR deployments, command support, and personal motivation can impact learning and maintenance.

Main Findings

The focus groups discussed three categories of barriers: lack of command support for language, lack of motivation, and deployments (i.e., that result in lack of opportunity to use language; Table 5, p. 21).

First, SOF operators said their command places low priority on language learning; this finding is congruent with findings from the *Grading the Chain of Command* report (Technical Report #2010011006) SOF operators stated they do not have time to engage in language learning and maintenance, most often because other training requirements are prioritized over language training. Furthermore, some focus group participants reported they do not have adequate language learning resources or they are not aware of available resources. Lastly, some participants said that they only have time to study language on their off-duty time.

Second, SOF operators indicated that they lack motivation because they are not going to use their required AOR language during outside AOR deployments or there is not an incentive to achieve and maintain language proficiency (e.g., obtaining a promotion; *Considering Language in the Promotion Process*, Technical Report #2010011043).

Finally, SOF operators lack opportunities to use their required AOR language during outside AOR deployments because they spend time learning the language used in their deployment region instead. Additionally, SOF operators discussed not having enough time to use their required AOR language prior to outside AOR deployments because they are often busy with other pre-mission training.

Detailed Findings

Focus group participants discussed several barriers to inhibiting language acquisition and maintenance, including lack of command support (e.g., low prioritization of language compared to other training requirements, lack of resources), lack of motivation, outside AOR deployments, and other barriers (e.g., language placement, language learning aptitude; see Table 5, p. 21). Verbatim comments from discussions provide further explanation about how these barriers inhibit SOF operators' ability to maintain and enhance language skills.

Table 5. Focus Group Theme Frequencies

Command Support Barriers	Count
Command's low prioritization of language learning	93
General time barriers	71
Lack of resources hinders language learning	30
Reliance on studying the language at home/no time during duty hours to study language	25
Other command/organizational support barriers	10
Lack of funding	8
Motivation Barrier	
Lack of motivation to learn language	50
Deployment Barriers	
No opportunity to use language during outside AOR deployments	22
General deployment barriers	9
No time to use language prior to deployment	9
Deployments outside of AOR require learning a new language before achieving proficiency in the required language	8
Deployed soldiers are not staying with same team	7
Lack of proficiency on a team prevents conversational practice while deployed	5
Other Barriers	
General other barriers	16
SOF personnel being pushed through language training	11
Individuals are not properly placed into a specific language	11
Lack of aptitude for language	10
Belief that learning a language limits career opportunities	9

Note. Please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002) for details about focus group coding.

Command Support Barriers

Focus group discussions relating to barriers included conversation about command's support for language and how it can inhibit SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance. Specifically, command's low prioritization of language learning was the most frequently mentioned barrier ($n = 93$). Comments related to this barrier discussed how low prioritization of language can lead to SOF operators being pulled from language training. Verbatim comments illustrating this discussion are presented below:

Participant: *"The same barriers. I think to solve that barrier, if you have leadership, make it mandatory and schedule it, now you have the time at work. It's as simple as that, just like everything else."*

Moderator: *"So that's a command emphasis type of issue."*

Participant: *"Absolutely, your commander or DL says this is important, one hour a week will do it. Simple as that."*

SOF Operator, AFSOC

“I had two companies that had to cancel training because of USASOC tasking. And I mean if they—when we’re canceling training to fill a tasking, there’s something seriously wrong.”

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

“We regularly get pulled from sustainment training, and sustainment training is such that there are so many people that have completely lost their language skills, such as myself, that are sitting at the table and relearning the alphabet.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

General time barriers were also discussed in the focus groups ($n = 71$). Discussion of this nature included conversation about lacking time for language training due to other job requirements:

“With it being such a perishable skill, I realize that like—because I just came out of the course not too long ago. I’m decent with it, but I notice a huge decrease in my ability, and I have not once picked up a book in between or done anything. But it’s all there to do it, but there’s no time. That’s the only problem that I’m running into is there’s—if you’re going to prioritize right now, this isn’t very high on the list. There’s a lot of other stuff going on. And that to actually set time aside, you have to keep doing it. I have to keep doing it on a regular basis. I can’t just do it for like one week and then six months later do it for another week. It has to be spread out for me and keep on doing it in between. And I haven’t done that, and there’s been a substantial decrease in my skill.”

SOF Operator, AFSOC

“I can’t get into the language lab when I’m here, either I’m TDY and deployed or I’m back here, and we have the unfortunate task of having more than just training missions back here. So when I’m on home station, I don’t have time for language training; I’ve got as much time for language training during deployment as I do back at home. So I can’t get to the language building; it’s 200 meters from my desk and I can’t ever get here.”

SOF Operator, 1st Bn 10th SFG

A third topic discussed in the focus groups related to the lack of language learning resources ($n = 30$). The nature of this conversation mostly involved the inability to use language learning resources on DoD computers and not being aware of available resources.

“The government computer, we’re not allowed to load DVDs, any programs or anything, internet, we can’t get streaming video, we can’t go to some websites; you can’t do anything at work. Like me, I hardly ever leave this base. When I come to the gate in the morning until I go to the gate in the afternoon, I don’t go to lunch, if I do I take it right back to my office and eat it. A lot of us do that. You can’t use that, any time you need downtime to study language, so it has to be done at home. So that would be—now, number six here says, computer on base studying Russian? No, he’s got other things he’s gotta do. But if he’s got 15 or 20 minutes, or an hour, he wants to spend his lunch hour studying Russian, I have no problem with that.”

SOF Operator, AFSOC

A fourth topic discussed in the focus groups related to having no time during duty hours to study language and, therefore, relying on study time at home ($n = 25$).

Moderator: *“So, do you do any self-study on your own?”*

Participant: *“I tried to a little bit. But, again, that’s on your off time and when you’re trying to weigh that with college work, doing professional, military education, study for promotion, everything else in life that’s going on, it quickly falls by the wayside because you have other things that are more important for your off duty.”*

SOF Operator, AFSOC

“But the problem is, I mean, I consider myself pretty committed, and I think I would love to say from 7:00 to 9:00 at night every night I’m going to prepare for speaking Pashto on my upcoming deployment. But realistically, I came back from a deployment two months ago and I’m leaving in two months, I’m fully in the PMT right now, which doesn’t incorporate any language training. There is just no way I’m going to go home from 7:00 to 9:00 and focus on language. I really think it’s important, but I don’t have the time to do it. And I haven’t been provided the opportunity in my work schedule to do that, which I think is hugely important. I really wish I was devoting a full amount of time during one day of the week, or whatever the case may be, because I think it’s that important.”

SOF Operator, 95th CA Bde

Lack of Motivation to Learn Language

Many focus group participants explained why they do not have motivation to learn their required AOR language. Most reasons were related to outside AOR deployments and how SOF operators know that they will not use their required AOR language. Additionally, some SOF operators said that language proficiency does not further a SOF operator’s career or promotional status, which decreases motivation to spend time learning and maintaining language.

“I think guys, at times, get discouraged in the language ability that they’re in. They feel like they’re never going to utilize the language, and so they just don’t even really try to work on it at all.”

SOF Operator, AFSOC

“And I mean, unless I’m completely wrong here, chief, then correct me, language doesn’t help a guy get the job he needs to do to the next promotion status. So, if I’ve got a guy who I think is a stellar SEAL, and I want to get him to the next pay grade, or I want him to make chief or I want him to be an LPO, I’m not going to recommend, or my chief is not going to recommend, that guy go take Spanish. He’s going to say—instead of like jumpmaster, go get operational quals that are responsible, that show a level of responsibility, so that you can make that next pay grade. And I don’t think—please correct me if I’m wrong—if they sit there and say, “Hey, he doesn’t have any of these quals, but he spent his entire six months to get Spanish.” That doesn’t do anything for any of our operators as far as career progression.”

SOF Operator, WARCOC

Deployment barriers

Focus group discussions addressed issues related to outside AOR deployments, including the lack of opportunity to practice or use official or required AOR language during outside AOR deployments, and outside AOR deployments requiring learning a new language.

Some focus group participants said that they have no opportunity to use language during outside AOR deployments, mostly because they focus on learning the language used in the deployment region ($n = 22$).

Participant: *“For the most part...didn’t have any language experience, but for the most part, it was four or five months, didn’t have any language experience, but most of us had—we graduated language lab, I had a 1+2 from the last one that was after five years from being out of the schoolhouse. So I mean, the big thing is, going regionally where you learn a new language, and most people don’t go to Arabic. I got sent to Iraq straight after language school.”*

Moderator: *“You were learning a different language?”*

Participant: *“I was learning Tagalog. I didn’t go to the Philippines for three years, so by the time I got there I had forgotten just about everything, so...”*
SOF Operator, 4th MISG

“...it’s hard to motivate a team to learn a language that they know they’re not going to be using downrange. If that’s the case, it really falls on that individual and it’s one of two things: either the monetary thing that comes with learning that language, it’s—or it’s somebody just wanting to better themselves. But it was—I mean, it was pretty hard to get that guy wanting to learn something and get him excited about learning that language when he knows when he’s going to be in country that’s not what he’s going to be using at all.”

SOF Operator, MARSOC

Focus group participants also said that they have no time to use official or required AOR language prior to outside AOR deployments due to other pre-deployment training requirements ($n = 9$).

“And like number two was saying, once they’re in a team, it’s too late. It’s not enough time. I’ve forgotten more than I’ve known. I’ve gotten manuals upon manuals upon manuals of all the different schools and quals that I have. And every time before I get ready to go downrange, I got to reread them, re-brush up on them, and then go back to the different training detachments and pick up what has been validated or changed from what I knew back then. I mean, it’s really an intense amount of information that we’re required to know on a daily basis before we can even go downrange and do what we need to do, try to caveat that we’re learning a language.”

SOF Operator, WARCOM (NSWC-1)

Some focus group participants pointed out that outside AOR deployments require SOF operators to learn the deployment language, and this takes priority over achieving and maintaining proficiency in their required language ($n = 8$).

“Guys won’t put the effort in if it’s no value to them. Especially now I’m working in Afghanistan; why would I spend any time learning Arabic, not when I can spend some time learning Urdu or Pashto or any one of the little tribal dialects if I can get my hands on it, and all that is just going to hurt my Arabic because it’s going to be another year, and another year before I go back to Arabic, but that’s what I’m coded as so that’s what I have to maintain.”

SOF Operator, 1st Bn 10th SFG

SECTION IV: SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS

SOF operators and leaders provided suggestions for overcoming barriers that inhibit language acquisition and maintenance. SOF leaders and those responsible for language training may consider evaluating and implementing these suggestions, as appropriate.

Research Question

This section addresses the following question:

- What suggestions did SOF operators and leaders have for overcoming barriers to language acquisition and maintenance?

Main Findings

Most suggestions were general in nature, related to competing training requirements, command's support for language, or time/OPTempo (Table 6, p. 26). Suggestions for removing competing training requirements included relocating language training off-site and protecting language training time. Suggestions for increasing command support included mandating language training and holding leadership accountable for their unit's language capability. Suggestions for reducing the time/OPTempo barrier included increasing the SOF force, emphasizing language at the team level, and removing red cycle taskings (e.g., time for executing administrative tasks).

Detailed Findings

SOF operators and leaders provided a variety of suggestions on how to remove the barriers that inhibit SOF operators' ability to acquire and maintain language skills. The most frequent suggestions were general in nature, related to reducing competing training requirements, increasing command support for language, or decreasing OPTempo (Table 6, p. 26).

Table 6. SOF Operator and Leader Suggestions for Removing Barriers

Theme	Overall	SOF Operators	SOF Leaders
General suggestions	30	10	20
Suggestions related to competing training requirements	20	9	11
Suggestions regarding lack of command support	18	8	10
Suggestions related to time/OPTempo	11	5	6
Suggestions related to resource availability	10	5	5
Suggestions related to lack of incentive	6	3	3
Other suggestions	2	1	1

Note. Please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002) for details on survey comment coding. Some comments contained more than one theme, therefore, then number of comments may not equal the number of codes assigned.

General Suggestions

General suggestions included providing language training during duty hours, increasing SOF manpower to allow SOF operators enough time for language training, providing immersion opportunities, and conducting language training away from the unit.

“Clear training calendar for language training.”

SOF Leader, Deployed SO unit

“The unit would benefit from conducting full-immersion training from which the involved personnel could not be removed for other training requirements.”

SOF Operator, MARSOC

“You can only be proficient at so many things and there are only so many hours in a day. Give soldiers time to study and they can make progress, but you have to sacrifice in other areas.”

SOF Operator, USSOCOM

“Make language training a daily activity, or just get rid of PT and give me the opportunity to attend language training first thing in the morning, every morning, for 1-2 hours. I'll take care of PT on my own.”

SOF Operator, 5th SFG

“MANPOWER. More personnel need to be allocated to the ODA and language specialists need to be given special duty to study.”

SOF Leader, Deployed SO unit

Suggestions Related to Competing Training Requirements

SOF operators and leaders suggested ways to remove or reduce other training requirements interfering with language training. These suggestions include protecting language training time and reducing distractions.

“In order to meet the SOCOM Objective, we need to remove operators from the unit to attend formal language training.”

SOF Operator, TRADOC

“Stick to the training schedule when it says ‘language maintenance’ and not schedule other things during those times. COC check on training like they would any other training.”

SOF Operator, 4th MISG

Suggestions Regarding Lack of Command Support

SOF operators and leaders suggested ways to increase command support for language, which includes mandating language training and making leadership accountable for language proficiency in their unit.

“Make a policy change at a high enough level and everyone must comply. Tie promotion to language proficiency and proficiency will increase; promotion will increase the SM's interest in language. There are more than enough resources for training already available. Lack of SM interest and command emphasis is the key issue.”

SOF Leader, 7th SFG

“As I stated before there needs to be some type of emphasis on language. Just like there is a list of training that needs to be completed prior to being allowed in theater. Place that language requirement on there, if you told a SF BN or CA Company that they would not be allowed in theater without one man per team having a 2/2/2 in the target language (and hold them to that) I bet you would have no problem achieving that goal. It would then be a priority of the CDRs to ensure that one guy per team conducted enough language training to meet the requirement.”

SOF Leader, 1st SFG

Suggestions Related to Time/OPTEMPO

Suggestions related to time/OPTEMPO include increasing the SOF force and decreasing red cycle taskings.

“Hire more people so that OPTEMPO isn't a barrier”

SOF Operator, AFSOC

“Red Cycle Taskings cannot continue between deployments if language is to be a priority.”

SOF Leader, 3rd SFG

SECTION V: CONCLUSION

This report identified barriers that inhibit SOF operators from acquiring or maintaining language proficiency from the perspective of SOF community members, so that SOF leaders and policymakers can develop plans to reduce or eliminate these barriers. Information from this report and other *Tier I* reports (*Grading the Chain of Command*, *Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus*, *Non-monetary Incentives*, and *Force Motivation*) are synthesized in a *Tier II* report, *Incentives/Barriers* (Technical Report #2010011034), which provides recommendations for eliminating or overcoming barriers to language acquisition and maintenance.

SOF operators and leaders indicated that there are barriers that inhibit SOF operators from acquiring or maintaining their required AOR language. SOF operators and leaders agreed that the top barriers to SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance are 1) time/OPTempo, 2) competing training requirements, and 3) outside AOR deployments.

Furthermore, respondents indicated that lack of command support for language is a barrier because oftentimes leadership decides that other training requirements take priority over language training. SOF operator and leaders suggested that command should place emphasis on language and prioritize it adequately in relation to other training requirements. To reduce the tendency to pull SOF operators from language training for other training requirements, SOF operators and leaders suggested that language training take place off-site and that SOF leaders should be held accountable for their units' proficiency testing results.

SOF operators and leaders rated resource availability as a *slight to moderate* barrier. This barrier can negatively influence language training quality and effectiveness because SOF operators may not receive language learning resources that will increase or maintain their proficiency. SOF operators and leaders indicated that some SOF operators do not have adequate language learning resources or they do not know that resources are available to them. Another *Tier I* report, *Language Resources & Self-study* (Technical Report #2010011021), addresses the current state of language learning resources available to SOF operators.

Although SOF leaders perceived lack of personal interest in language learning as more of a barrier than SOF operators, reasons why SOF operators are not motivated to learn their required AOR language were captured in survey comments and focus group discussion. SOF operators are not motivated to maintain their required AOR language because it is not used on outside AOR deployments, and also because they perceive that there is not enough incentive to maintain their proficiency.

Comments provided by SOF operators and leaders identified additional barriers that prevent or inhibit language acquisition and maintenance, including: lack of funding for language training or language learning resources; lack of effective incentives to acquire and maintain language proficiency; and language aptitude not reflected in language assignment.

SOF operators and leaders reported that SOF operators would engage in language acquisition and maintenance *every week* if all barriers were removed. This finding is encouraging because it suggests that SOF operators are motivated to learn their official or required AOR language.

Findings from this report indicate that, although there are barriers that prevent language learning and maintenance, there are potential opportunities to reduce or remove these barriers, such as communicating the importance of language throughout the SOF community to facilitate an increase in command emphasis on language. Please refer to a *Tier II* report, *Incentives/Barriers* (Technical Report #2010011034), which provides recommendations for eliminating or overcoming barriers identified in this report and other relevant *Tier I* reports.

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One specific practice area is analytics, research, and consulting on foreign language and culture in work contexts. In this area, SWA has conducted numerous projects, including language assessment validation and psychometric research; evaluations of language training, training tools, and job aids; language and culture focused needs assessments and job analysis; and advanced analysis of language research data.

Based in Raleigh, NC, and led by Drs. Eric A. Surface and Stephen J. Ward, SWA now employs close to twenty I/O professionals at the masters and PhD levels. SWA professionals are committed to providing clients the best data and analysis with which to make solid data-driven decisions. Taking a scientist-practitioner perspective, SWA professionals conduct model-based, evidence-driven research and consulting to provide the best answers and solutions to enhance our clients' mission and business objectives. SWA has competencies in measurement, data collection, analytics, data modeling, systematic reviews, validation, and evaluation.

For more information about SWA, our projects, and our capabilities, please visit our website (www.swa-consulting.com) or contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Stephen J. Ward (sward@swa-consulting.com).

The following SWA Consulting Inc. team members contributed to this report (listed in alphabetical order):

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APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT

In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to inform the development of a language transformation strategy in response to a GAO report (2003). This *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* collected current-state information about language usage, proficiency, training, and policy issues (e.g., Foreign Language Proficiency Pay, FLPP) from SOF personnel, SOF unit leaders, and other personnel involved in SOF language. The project used multiple data collection methods and provided the SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and advocate for the SOF perspective on language issues within the DoD community.

In a continuing effort to update knowledge of language and culture needs while informing strategic plan development, the SOFLO commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) to reassess the language and culture landscape across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and develop a strategy for the next five years. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including SOF operators and leaders. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted between March and June, 2009. A comprehensive, web-based survey for SOF operators and leaders was launched on 26 October and closed on 24 November, 2009.

This project's findings will be disseminated through reports and briefings (see Appendix B, Figure 1, p. X). Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. The remaining reports are organized in three tiers. Twenty-five *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*) while including additional data and analysis on the topic. Most, but not all, *Tier I* reports will roll into *Tier II* reports. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. All *Tier III* reports are associated with a briefing. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and subject to change.

In June, 2009, the GAO reported that the Department of Defense is making progress toward transforming language and regional proficiency capabilities but still does not have a strategic plan in place to continue development that includes actionable goals and objectives. The findings from this study can be used by the SOFLO and SOF leaders at USSOCOM to continue strategic planning and development in this area.

This project design, logistics, data collection, initial analysis and first eight reports of this project were conducted by SWA Consulting Inc. (SWA) under a subcontract with SRC (SR20080668 (K142); Prime # N65236-08-D-6805). The additional reports are funded under a separate contracting vehicle with Gemini Industries Inc. [GEM02-ALMBOS-0018 (10210SWA-1); Prime # USZA22-02-D-0015]. For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpcharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

Appendix A, Figure 1. Report Overview



Note: Foundation reports are referenced by every other report. Colors represent *Tier I* reports that roll (integrate) into an associated *Tier II* report. Reports in black are final reports on the topic but may be cited by other reports. *Tier II* reports roll into the *Tier III* reports. All *Tier III* reports include an associated briefing.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Focus Group Participants

Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 126 SOF personnel across the SOF community. Focus groups were conducted with the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Marine Corps Force Special Operations Forces Command (MARSOFC), Naval Special Warfare Command (WARCOM), and United States Army Special Operations Forces (USASOC; see *Participation Report*, Technical Report #2010011003 for participant details). Section II of this report presents focus group discussion related to barriers that inhibit language learning and maintenance (see *Methodology Report*, Technical Report #2010011002 for the focus group interview guide).

Survey Participants

Survey respondents received the SOF operator version of the items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:

- SOF Operator
- SOF Operator assigned to other duty
- MI Linguist or 09L assigned or attached to a SOF unit

Survey respondents received the SOF leader version of the items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:

- SOF Unit Commander
- Command Language Program Manager (CLPM)
- Language office personnel

The focus of this report is on SOF operator and leader perspectives; therefore, MI Linguist/09L, CLPM, and language office personnel perspectives are not included this report. Overall, 968 SOF operators and 743 SOF leaders responded to the survey items presented in this report. For further details on participation and attrition rates, please refer to the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003).

Measures

Closed-Ended Survey Items

Survey respondents rated six potential barriers to SOF operators' language acquisition and maintenance on a 5-point barrier scale (1 = *Not a barrier* to 5 = *Extreme barrier*). The barriers included on the survey (presented in the following order) were:

- Resource availability
- Time/OPTempo
- Lack of command support
- Competing training requirements

- Outside AOR deployments
- Lack of personal interest

Respondents also had the opportunity to identify one additional barrier that was not included on the survey and rate it on the same 5-point barrier scale. Eleven SOF operators identified an additional barrier and rated it. Twelve SOF leaders identified an additional barrier and rated it.

Additionally, respondents indicated how often they (or their SOF operators) would engage in acquisition and/or maintenance of language proficiency if all barriers were removed. Responses were on a 6-point frequency scale (1 = *Never*, 6 = *Every day*).

Open-Ended Survey Items

SOF operators and leaders also received the following open-ended item: *Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the barriers that interfere with or prevent development and/or maintenance of language capability [in your unit]⁵ (i.e., how would you remove them?).*

One-hundred-forty of 1,635 (9%) SOF operator respondents and 190 of 1,235 (15%) SOF leader respondents provided a comment in response to this item.

Analyses

Closed-Ended Items

All closed-ended survey responses were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. To compare responses across groups of participants, inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests and analysis of variance) were used to determine if any observed differences are likely to exist in the broader population of interest. Among the groups compared included:

- SOF operators and SOF leaders
- SOF components (e.g., AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOC, USASOC)
- USASOC units (e.g., 4th MISG, 95th CA Bde, 1st SFG)
- Pay grade (within E, WO, and O)
- Level of command
- Unit commanders, Senior Warrant Officer Advisors (SWOAs), Senior Enlisted Advisors (SEAs), and Staff Officers

No barrier rating differences were found for pay grade or position (i.e., unit commanders, SWOAs, SEAs, staff officers). Other relevant group differences are reported in the report body.

⁵ Wording in brackets represents the wording in the SOF leader item.

Open-Ended Items and Focus Group Discussions

To analyze the open-ended items (survey comments), two raters created a content code (i.e., theme) list based on available responses (see *Methodology Report*, Technical Report #2010011002 for details on qualitative coding). A primary rater then coded each response and a secondary rater coded 30% of the responses. Raters determined the consistency of codes applied between raters and discussed any disagreements to consensus. The frequency of occurrence for each theme is presented in this report. Analysis of the focus group data followed the same protocol, except 100% of the responses were coded by two raters.

For further details on these methods please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

APPENDIX C: SURVEY RESPONSES BY SOF COMPONENT

Appendix C, Table 1. SOF Operator Responses by SOF Component

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	<i>Overall</i>	968	3.92	7%	5%	21%	25%	42%
	USSOCOM HQ	106	3.98	5%	4%	24%	25%	43%
	AFSOC	19	4.21	5%	10%	0%	26%	58%
	USASOC	709	3.86	7%	4%	23%	25%	40%
	WARCOM	7	4.29	14%	0%	14%	0%	71%
	MARSOC	12	4.00	0%	17%	8%	33%	42%
	TSOC	11	3.82	18%	9%	0%	18%	55%
	Deployed SO Unit	48	4.17	4%	6%	13%	23%	54%
Competing training requirements	<i>Overall</i>	966	3.53	11%	8%	28%	22%	30%
	USSOCOM HQ	108	3.40	12%	11%	29%	21%	27%
	AFSOC	19	3.68	11%	11%	5%	47%	26%
	USASOC	704	3.51	12%	7%	30%	22%	29%
	WARCOM	7	3.86	14%	14%	0%	14%	57%
	MARSOC	12	4.08	0%	17%	8%	25%	50%
	TSOC	11	3.36	18%	18%	9%	18%	36%
	Deployed SO Unit	48	3.63	10%	13%	21%	17%	40%
Outside AOR deployments	<i>Overall</i>	961	3.11	21%	11%	27%	18%	23%
	USSOCOM HQ	107	2.93	25%	11%	32%	9%	22%
	AFSOC	19	3.00	21%	11%	32%	21%	16%
	USASOC	701	3.10	22%	10%	28%	18%	22%
	WARCOM	7	3.14	14%	29%	14%	14%	29%
	MARSOC	12	3.08	17%	17%	25%	25%	17%
	TSOC	11	3.73	18%	9%	9%	9%	55%
	Deployed SO Unit	48	3.48	19%	10%	19%	8%	44%

Note. Items are presented in descending order by overall average across SOF operators. The overall group consists of all SOF operator responses (including SOF operators assigned to other duty). The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. JSOC was not included due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

Appendix C, Table 1 (continued). SOF Operator Responses by SOF Component

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Lack of command support	Overall	959	2.44	34%	16%	30%	12%	8%
	USSOCOM HQ	108	2.38	35%	18%	29%	11%	7%
	AFSOC	19	2.37	47%	5%	21%	16%	11%
	USASOC	700	2.41	35%	16%	31%	11%	7%
	WARCOM	7	2.29	57%	0%	14%	14%	14%
	MARSOC	12	3.25	8%	8%	42%	33%	8%
	TSOC	11	2.91	27%	9%	18%	36%	9%
	Deployed SO Unit	48	2.50	29%	21%	33%	4%	13%
Resource availability	Overall	965	2.23	37%	19%	32%	9%	3%
	USSOCOM HQ	108	2.43	28%	19%	39%	13%	2%
	AFSOC	19	2.53	42%	16%	10%	10%	21%
	USASOC	703	2.16	39%	19%	32%	8%	2%
	WARCOM	7	2.43	43%	0%	43%	0%	14%
	MARSOC	12	2.42	42%	0%	33%	25%	0%
	TSOC	11	2.09	55%	0%	36%	0%	9%
	Deployed SO Unit	48	2.25	38%	23%	23%	10%	6%
Lack of personal interest	Overall	963	1.98	47%	20%	25%	6%	3%
	USSOCOM HQ	108	1.91	51%	18%	24%	5%	3%
	AFSOC	19	1.58	74%	11%	5%	5%	5%
	USASOC	701	2.01	45%	19%	27%	5%	3%
	WARCOM	7	1.29	71%	29%	0%	0%	0%
	MARSOC	12	1.75	58%	17%	17%	8%	0%
	TSOC	11	1.46	64%	27%	9%	0%	0%
	Deployed SO Unit	47	1.87	53%	23%	13%	4%	6%

Note. Items are presented in descending order by overall average across SOF operators. The overall group consists of all SOF operator responses (including SOF operators assigned to other duty). The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. JSOC was not included due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

Appendix C, Table 2. SOF Operator Responses by SOF Component

Item	Group	n	Mean	Never	Once every few months	Every month	Every week	2-3 times a week	Every day
Time spent on acquiring/maintaining language proficiency if all barriers removed	Overall	980	4.19	4%	10%	20%	27%	23%	16%
	USSOCOM HQ	110	4.07 ^{ab}	7%	10%	18%	32%	15%	17%
	AFSOC	19	4.21 ^{ab}	0%	16%	5%	32%	42%	5%
	USASOC	711	4.10 ^a	4%	11%	22%	25%	24%	14%
	WARCOM	7	4.43 ^{ab}	0%	0%	14%	29%	57%	0%
	MARSOC	12	5.58 ^b	0%	0%	17%	8%	25%	50%
	TSOC	13	5.15 ^{ab}	0%	0%	8%	46%	8%	38%
	Deployed SO Unit	49	4.45 ^{ab}	2%	2%	22%	29%	29%	17%

Note. The overall group consists of all SOF operator responses (including SOF operators assigned to other duty). The question prompt for these items was “If all of the previous barriers to acquiring and/or maintaining language proficiency were removed, how often would you engage in acquisition and/or maintenance of language proficiency?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once every few months*, 3 = *Every month*, 4 = *Every week*, 5 = *2-3 times a week*, 6 = *Every day*. SOF components sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. SOF components NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. JSOC was not included due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

Appendix C, Table 3. SOF Leader Responses by SOF Component

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	<i>Overall</i>	743	4.23	3%	5%	11%	26%	54%
	USSOCOM HQ	89	4.03 ^a	7%	3%	16%	28%	46%
	AFSOC	8	4.25 ^a	0%	0%	13%	50%	38%
	USASOC	459	4.30 ^a	3%	5%	10%	24%	58%
	WARCOM	10	4.10 ^a	10%	0%	20%	10%	60%
	MARSOC	20	4.00 ^a	5%	10%	5%	40%	40%
	JSOC	6	4.50 ^a	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
	TSOC	51	4.26 ^a	2%	2%	10%	41%	45%
	Deployed SO Unit	46	4.26 ^a	4%	2%	15%	20%	59%
Competing training requirements	<i>Overall</i>	742	3.88	7%	8%	15%	30%	40%
	USSOCOM HQ	89	3.62 ^a	12%	9%	17%	28%	34%
	AFSOC	8	4.25 ^a	0%	0%	12%	50%	38%
	USASOC	458	3.99 ^a	6%	7%	14%	28%	45%
	WARCOM	10	3.00 ^a	40%	0%	10%	20%	30%
	MARSOC	20	3.50 ^a	10%	15%	10%	45%	20%
	JSOC	6	4.00 ^a	0%	17%	0%	50%	33%
	TSOC	51	3.67 ^a	2%	20%	16%	35%	27%
	Deployed SO Unit	46	4.26 ^a	2%	2%	15%	28%	52%
Outside AOR deployments	<i>Overall</i>	739	3.10	22%	13%	19%	23%	22%
	USSOCOM HQ	89	2.92 ^{ab}	27%	12%	20%	22%	18%
	AFSOC	8	3.25 ^{ab}	13%	0%	37%	50%	0%
	USASOC	457	3.21 ^a	20%	12%	18%	24%	25%
	WARCOM	10	2.00 ^{ab}	40%	30%	20%	10%	0%
	MARSOC	20	2.65 ^{ab}	35%	10%	20%	25%	10%
	JSOC	6	2.50 ^{ab}	17%	33%	33%	17%	0%
	TSOC	49	2.49 ^b	33%	20%	20%	18%	8%
	Deployed SO Unit	46	3.44 ^{ab}	13%	13%	22%	22%	30%























































Note. Items are presented in descending order by overall average across SOF leaders. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. SOF components sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. SOF components NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%.

Appendix C, Table 3 (continued). SOF Leader Responses by SOF Component

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Resource availability	Overall	739	2.44	28%	25%	27%	14%	5%
	USSOCOM HQ	89	2.55 ^{ab}	28%	18%	31%	16%	7%
	AFSOC	8	3.38 ^{ab}	13%	13%	13%	50%	13%
	USASOC	457	2.28 ^a	32%	27%	27%	11%	4%
	WARCOM	10	2.30 ^{ab}	20%	40%	30%	10%	0%
	MARSOC	20	2.65 ^{ab}	20%	35%	15%	20%	10%
	JSOC	6	3.00 ^{ab}	33%	0%	17%	33%	17%
	TSOC	50	2.88 ^b	20%	12%	36%	24%	8%
	Deployed SO Unit	46	2.59 ^{ab}	22%	28%	26%	17%	7%
Lack of personal interest	Overall	738	2.42	24%	30%	31%	11%	5%
	USSOCOM HQ	88	2.55 ^a	19%	30%	33%	14%	5%
	AFSOC	8	3.00 ^{ab}	0%	13%	75%	12%	0%
	USASOC	459	2.44 ^{ab}	23%	30%	32%	10%	5%
	WARCOM	10	2.60 ^{ab}	20%	30%	20%	30%	0%
	MARSOC	19	1.63 ^b	47%	42%	11%	0%	0%
	JSOC	6	2.67 ^{ab}	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%
	TSOC	49	1.96 ^b	37%	39%	18%	4%	2%
	Deployed SO Unit	45	2.36 ^{ab}	29%	24%	33%	9%	4%
Lack of command support	Overall	737	2.21	40%	21%	22%	11%	6%
	USSOCOM HQ	88	2.41 ^{ab}	31%	22%	30%	13%	6%
	AFSOC	8	3.13 ^{ab}	0%	38%	25%	25%	12%
	USASOC	457	2.10 ^a	45%	19%	21%	10%	5%
	WARCOM	10	2.00 ^{ab}	40%	30%	20%	10%	0%
	MARSOC	20	1.50 ^a	55%	40%	5%	0%	0%
	JSOC	5	2.20 ^{ab}	60%	0%	0%	40%	0%
	TSOC	50	2.22 ^{ab}	44%	18%	16%	16%	6%
	Deployed SO Unit	46	2.52 ^{ab}	24%	33%	24%	7%	13%

Note. Items are presented in descending order by overall average across SOF leaders. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” SOF components sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. SOF components NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%.

Appendix C, Table 4. SOF Leader Responses by SOF Component

Item	Group	n	Mean	Never	Once every few months	Every month	Every week	2-3 times a week	Every day
Time spent on acquiring/maintaining language proficiency if all barriers removed	Overall	724	4.19	1% 	6% 	18% 	36% 	24% 	15% 
	USSOCOM HQ	80	4.25	1% 	6% 	14% 	40% 	23% 	16% 
	AFSOC	7	3.29	0% 	29% 	29% 	29% 	14% 	0% 
	USASOC	455	4.18	2% 	5% 	18% 	37% 	25% 	13% 
	WARCOM	10	4.60	0% 	10% 	10% 	30% 	10% 	40% 
	MARSOC	18	4.83	0% 	0% 	17% 	11% 	44% 	28% 
	JSOC	6	3.33	0% 	33% 	17% 	33% 	17% 	0% 
	TSOC	51	3.92	0% 	12% 	22% 	37% 	22% 	8% 
	Deployed SO unit	46	4.30	0% 	11% 	13% 	30% 	26% 	20% 

Note. The overall group consists of all SOF leader responses. The question prompt for these items was “If all of the above barriers to acquiring and/or maintaining operators’ language proficiency were removed, how often would you encourage your operators to engage in acquisition and/or maintenance of language proficiency?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once every few months*, 3 = *Every month*, 4 = *Every week*, 5 = *2-3 times a week*, 6 = *Every day*. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%.

APPENDIX D: SURVEY RESPONSES BY USASOC UNIT

Appendix D, Table 1. SOF Operator Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	USASOC Overall	703	3.86	7%	4%	23%	25%	40%
	USASOC HQ	5	2.80 ^{ab}	40%	0%	20%	20%	20%
	SWCS- Staff	18	4.00 ^{ab}	6%	6%	11%	39%	39%
	4th MISG	108	3.37 ^{ab}	13%	11%	27%	24%	25%
	95th CA Bde	135	3.92 ^b	9%	3%	22%	19%	47%
	1st SFG	65	4.05 ^{ab}	29%	14%	40%	11%	6%
	3rd SFG	79	3.90 ^{ab}	6%	4%	28%	18%	44%
	5th SFG	115	4.29 ^{ab}	3%	1%	15%	29%	53%
	7th SFG	85	3.75 ^b	9%	2%	26%	28%	34%
	10th SFG	46	4.09 ^{ab}	2%	2%	22%	33%	41%
	19th SFG	12	3.42 ^{ab}	8%	25%	17%	17%	33%
	20th SFG	29	3.48 ^{ab}	3%	7%	34%	48%	7%
Competing training requirements	USASOC Overall	704	3.51	12%	7%	30%	22%	29%
	USASOC HQ	5	3.40 ^{ab}	40%	0%	0%	0%	60%
	SWCS- Staff	18	3.44 ^{ab}	6%	22%	17%	33%	22%
	4th MISG	107	3.24 ^b	17%	9%	29%	22%	22%
	95th CA Bde	134	3.63 ^{ab}	10%	4%	28%	28%	30%
	1st SFG	66	3.70 ^{ab}	8%	5%	38%	11%	39%
	3rd SFG	78	3.46 ^a	12%	9%	33%	14%	32%
	5th SFG	114	3.84 ^b	7%	5%	26%	19%	42%
	7th SFG	84	3.02 ^{ab}	18%	11%	39%	15%	17%
	10th SFG	46	3.67 ^{ab}	11%	4%	24%	28%	33%
	19th SFG	12	3.59 ^{ab}	8%	8%	17%	50%	17%
	20th SFG	29	3.31 ^{ab}	14%	3%	28%	48%	7%

Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across USASOC operator responses. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = Not a barrier, 2 = Slight barrier, 3 = Moderate barrier, 4 = Considerable barrier, 5 = Extreme barrier. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 3$).

Appendix D, Table 1 (continued). SOF Operator Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Outside AOR deployments	USASOC Overall	701	3.10	22%	10%	28%	18%	22%
	USASOC HQ	5	2.80 ^{ab}	20%	0%	20%	20%	20%
	SWCS- Staff	18	2.89 ^{ab}	33%	0%	22%	33%	11%
	4th MISG	105	3.06 ^b	23%	12%	26%	14%	25%
	95th CA Bde	133	3.41 ^b	14%	9%	28%	20%	29%
	1st SFG	65	3.51 ^b	11%	11%	28%	18%	32%
	3rd SFG	79	2.99 ^a	20%	9%	42%	10%	19%
	5th SFG	113	2.24 ^b	48%	11%	20%	12%	9%
	7th SFG	85	3.68 ^b	7%	7%	28%	26%	32%
	10th SFG	46	3.46 ^{ab}	17%	4%	22%	28%	28%
	19th SFG	12	2.75 ^{ab}	17%	25%	25%	33%	0%
	20th SFG	28	2.79 ^{ab}	21%	14%	36%	21%	7%
Lack of command support	USASOC Overall	700	2.41	35%	16%	31%	11%	7%
	USASOC HQ	5	2.20 ^{ab}	60%	0%	20%	0%	20%
	SWCS- Staff	18	2.44 ^{ab}	33%	17%	22%	28%	0%
	4th MISG	106	2.46 ^{ab}	34%	16%	26%	17%	7%
	95th CA Bde	134	2.76 ^a	21%	16%	40%	10%	12%
	1st SFG	65	2.51 ^b	29%	14%	40%	11%	6%
	3rd SFG	79	2.11 ^{ab}	51%	9%	28%	4%	9%
	5th SFG	112	2.30 ^{ab}	38%	20%	26%	9%	8%
	7th SFG	84	2.18 ^{ab}	42%	13%	35%	7%	4%
	10th SFG	46	2.52 ^{ab}	26%	26%	24%	17%	7%
	19th SFG	10	2.60 ^b	20%	30%	30%	10%	10%
	20th SFG	29	1.86 ^{ab}	52%	17%	24%	7%	0%









































































Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across USASOC operator responses. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 3$).

Appendix D, Table 1 (continued). SOF Operator Responses by USASOSC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Resource availability	USASOC Overall	703	2.16	39%	19%	32%	8%	2%
	USASOC HQ	5	1.80 ^{abc}	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
	SWCS- Staff	18	2.28 ^{abc}	44%	6%	33%	11%	6%
	4th MISG	106	2.10 ^b	35%	29%	29%	5%	2%
	95th CA Bde	134	2.47 ^{ab}	23%	24%	40%	10%	3%
	1st SFG	66	2.11 ^{bc}	47%	9%	33%	8%	3%
	3rd SFG	78	2.04 ^{bc}	49%	13%	28%	6%	4%
	5th SFG	114	1.82 ^c	56%	16%	19%	8%	1%
	7th SFG	83	2.00 ^c	42%	18%	37%	2%	0%
	10th SFG	46	2.09 ^{bc}	39%	20%	35%	7%	0%
	19th SFG	12	3.33 ^a	0%	33%	25%	17%	25%
	20th SFG	29	2.79 ^{ab}	10%	24%	41%	24%	0%
Lack of personal interest	USASOC Overall	701	2.01	45%	19%	27%	5%	3%
	USASOC HQ	5	2.00 ^a	40%	20%	40%	0%	0%
	SWCS- Staff	18	2.00 ^a	50%	17%	22%	6%	6%
	4th MISG	106	2.07 ^a	43%	23%	22%	8%	4%
	95th CA Bde	134	1.88 ^a	51%	18%	25%	4%	1%
	1st SFG	65	2.14 ^a	42%	14%	37%	5%	3%
	3rd SFG	77	2.16 ^a	38%	22%	32%	3%	5%
	5th SFG	114	2.04 ^a	41%	23%	29%	5%	2%
	7th SFG	84	2.60 ^a	43%	19%	30%	6%	2%
	10th SFG	46	2.00 ^a	48%	22%	20%	4%	7%
	19th SFG	12	1.75 ^a	58%	8%	33%	0%	0%
	20th SFG	28	1.61 ^a	64%	11%	25%	0%	0%

Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across USASOC operator responses. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 3$).

Appendix D, Table 2. SOF Operator Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Never	Once every few months	Every month	Every week	2-3 times a week	Every day
Time spent on acquiring/maintaining language proficiency if all barriers removed	USASOC Overall	711	4.10	4% 	11% 	22% 	25% 	24% 	14% 
	USASOC HQ	5	3.80 ^{ab}	0% 	0% 	40% 	40% 	20% 	0% 
	SWCS-Staff	18	4.00 ^{ab}	0% 	6% 	33% 	28% 	28% 	6% 
	4th MISG	108	4.79 ^a	5% 	0% 	7% 	21% 	36% 	25% 
	95th CA Bde	134	4.52 ^{ac}	1% 	7% 	16% 	25% 	34% 	17% 
	1st SFG	66	3.59 ^b	3% 	17% 	35% 	24% 	14% 	8% 
	3rd SFG	80	3.30 ^b	11% 	16% 	30% 	24% 	15% 	4% 
	5th SFG	114	3.93 ^{bc}	3% 	11% 	25% 	34% 	17% 	11% 
	7th SFG	85	4.05 ^{ab}	6% 	7% 	34% 	15% 	21% 	16% 
	10th SFG	47	3.70 ^{bc}	9% 	19% 	17% 	26% 	19% 	11% 
	19th SFG	12	4.33 ^{ab}	8% 	0% 	17% 	33% 	25% 	17% 
	20th SFG	29	4.24 ^{ab}	3% 	14% 	7% 	34% 	28% 	14% 

Note. The overall group consists of all USASOC operator respondents (including to SOF operators assigned to other duty). The question prompt for these items was “If all of the previous barriers to acquiring and/or maintaining language proficiency were removed, how often would you engage in acquisition and/or maintenance of language proficiency?” USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once every few months*, 3 = *Every month*, 4 = *Every week*, 5 = *2-3 times a week*, 6 = *Every day*. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ was not included due to small sample size ($n = 3$).

Appendix D, Table 3. SOF Leader Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	<i>USASOC Overall</i>	459	4.30	3%	5%	10%	24%	58%
	USASOC HQ	15	4.00 ^{ab}	7%	0%	13%	47%	33%
	SWCS- Staff	35	3.97 ^{ab}	9%	6%	14%	23%	49%
	4th MISG	88	3.98 ^a	1%	14%	15%	27%	43%
	95th CA Bde	60	4.38 ^{ab}	0%	3%	8%	35%	53%
	1st SFG	39	4.67 ^b	0%	0%	8%	18%	74%
	3rd SFG	44	4.57 ^{ab}	2%	0%	9%	16%	73%
	5th SFG	66	4.53 ^{ab}	2%	3%	8%	17%	71%
	7th SFG	32	4.25 ^{ab}	6%	3%	16%	9%	66%
	10th SFG	39	4.51 ^{ab}	3%	3%	3%	26%	67%
	19th SFG	7	4.14 ^{ab}	0%	0%	14%	57%	29%
	20th SFG	8	3.63 ^{ab}	0%	25%	0%	63%	13%
Competing training requirements	<i>USASOC Overall</i>	458	3.99	6%	7%	14%	28%	45%
	USASOC HQ	15	3.87 ^a	7%	7%	13%	40%	33%
	SWCS- Staff	36	3.75 ^a	14%	6%	11%	31%	39%
	4th MISG	87	3.74 ^a	5%	11%	23%	28%	33%
	95th CA Bde	60	4.10 ^a	0%	12%	12%	32%	45%
	1st SFG	39	4.36 ^a	0%	0%	18%	28%	54%
	3rd SFG	44	4.14 ^a	9%	14%	0%	23%	54%
	5th SFG	66	4.14 ^a	9%	3%	9%	23%	56%
	7th SFG	32	4.03 ^a	3%	9%	13%	31%	44%
	10th SFG	39	4.05 ^a	10%	3%	5%	36%	46%
	19th SFG	6	4.33 ^a	0%	0%	17%	33%	50%
	20th SFG	8	3.50 ^a	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%

Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across USASOC leaders. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

Appendix D, Table 3 (continued). SOF Leader Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Outside AOR deployments	<i>USASOC Overall</i>	457	3.21	20%	12%	18%	24%	25%
	USASOC HQ	14	2.93 ^{ab}	29%	14%	14%	21%	21%
	SWCS- Staff	36	2.81 ^a	39%	3%	17%	22%	19%
	4th MISG	88	3.23 ^a	18%	7%	30%	25%	20%
	95th CA Bde	58	3.43 ^a	10%	16%	19%	31%	24%
	1st SFG	39	3.77 ^a	5%	5%	31%	26%	33%
	3rd SFG	44	3.41 ^a	14%	14%	23%	18%	32%
	5th SFG	66	1.77 ^b	56%	26%	8%	6%	5%
	7th SFG	32	4.13 ^{ab}	3%	3%	13%	41%	41%
	10th SFG	39	4.03 ^{ab}	8%	8%	8%	28%	49%
	19th SFG	7	3.43 ^{ab}	14%	14%	0%	57%	14%
	20th SFG	8	3.13 ^{ab}	0%	38%	25%	25%	12%
Resource availability	<i>USASOC Overall</i>	457	2.28	32%	27%	27%	11%	4%
	USASOC HQ	15	2.47 ^{ab}	13%	40%	33%	13%	0%
	SWCS- Staff	36	2.06 ^a	36%	31%	28%	3%	3%
	4th MISG	87	2.31 ^a	26%	29%	34%	8%	2%
	95th CA Bde	60	2.57 ^{ab}	17%	32%	33%	15%	3%
	1st SFG	39	2.00 ^a	49%	18%	21%	10%	3%
	3rd SFG	44	2.25 ^a	30%	30%	30%	9%	2%
	5th SFG	66	1.97 ^a	44%	24%	24%	6%	2%
	7th SFG	32	1.97 ^a	44%	28%	19%	6%	3%
	10th SFG	38	2.08 ^a	42%	24%	21%	11%	3%
	19th SFG	6	3.50 ^{ab}	0%	17%	33%	33%	17%
	20th SFG	8	4.00 ^b	0%	13%	13%	37%	37%

Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across USASOC leaders. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

Appendix D, Table 3 (continued). SOF Leader Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a barrier	Slight barrier	Moderate barrier	Considerable barrier	Extreme barrier
Lack of personal interest	USASOC Overall	459	2.44	23%	30%	32%	10%	5%
	USASOC HQ	15	2.73 ^a	7%	40%	33%	13%	7%
	SWCS- Staff	36	2.42 ^a	28%	22%	36%	8%	6%
	4th MISG	88	2.43 ^a	26%	27%	27%	16%	3%
	95th CA Bde	59	2.14 ^a	31%	39%	22%	3%	5%
	1st SFG	39	2.46 ^a	18%	31%	41%	8%	3%
	3rd SFG	44	2.46 ^a	25%	30%	30%	7%	9%
	5th SFG	66	2.73 ^a	17%	27%	30%	18%	8%
	7th SFG	32	2.19 ^a	25%	38%	34%	0%	3%
	10th SFG	39	2.51 ^a	15%	33%	38%	10%	3%
	19th SFG	7	2.71 ^a	14%	29%	43%	0%	14%
	20th SFG	8	2.00 ^a	50%	13%	25%	12%	0%
Lack of command support	USASOC Overall	457	2.10	45%	19%	21%	10%	5%
	USASOC HQ	15	2.13 ^a	47%	13%	27%	7%	7%
	SWCS- Staff	36	2.17 ^a	44%	14%	28%	8%	6%
	4th MISG	88	2.19 ^a	36%	26%	23%	11%	3%
	95th CA Bde	60	2.32 ^a	38%	18%	25%	10%	8%
	1st SFG	39	2.15 ^a	46%	10%	26%	18%	0%
	3rd SFG	43	2.05 ^a	47%	21%	19%	9%	5%
	5th SFG	66	1.89 ^a	54%	17%	17%	9%	3%
	7th SFG	31	1.97 ^a	48%	13%	32%	6%	0%
	10th SFG	39	1.90 ^a	51%	26%	10%	8%	5%
	19th SFG	6	2.83 ^a	17%	50%	0%	0%	33%
	20th SFG	8	1.75 ^a	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%

Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across USASOC leaders. The question prompt for these items was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

Appendix D, Table 4. SOF Leader Responses by USASOC Unit

Item	Group	n	Mean	Never	Once every few months	Every month	Every week	2-3 times a week	Every day
Time spent on acquiring/maintaining language proficiency if all barriers removed	USASOC Overall	455	4.18	2%	5%	18%	37%	25%	13%
	USASOC HQ	15	4.00 ^{ab}	0%	7%	20%	40%	33%	0%
	SWCS- Staff	36	4.22 ^{ab}	0%	3%	19%	42%	25%	11%
	4th MISG	86	4.63 ^a	1%	1%	5%	33%	48%	13%
	95th CA Bde	58	4.66 ^a	2%	0%	9%	34%	31%	24%
	1st SFG	39	3.46 ^b	3%	21%	18%	49%	8%	3%
	3rd SFG	44	4.36 ^a	0%	0%	27%	32%	18%	23%
	5th SFG	66	4.38 ^a	0%	2%	21%	35%	23%	20%
	7th SFG	32	3.59 ^b	6%	6%	22%	53%	13%	0%
	10th SFG	39	3.69 ^b	3%	10%	31%	38%	8%	10%
	19th SFG	7	3.00 ^b	0%	29%	57%	0%	14%	0%
	20th SFG	8	3.75 ^{ab}	0%	13%	37%	25%	13%	13%

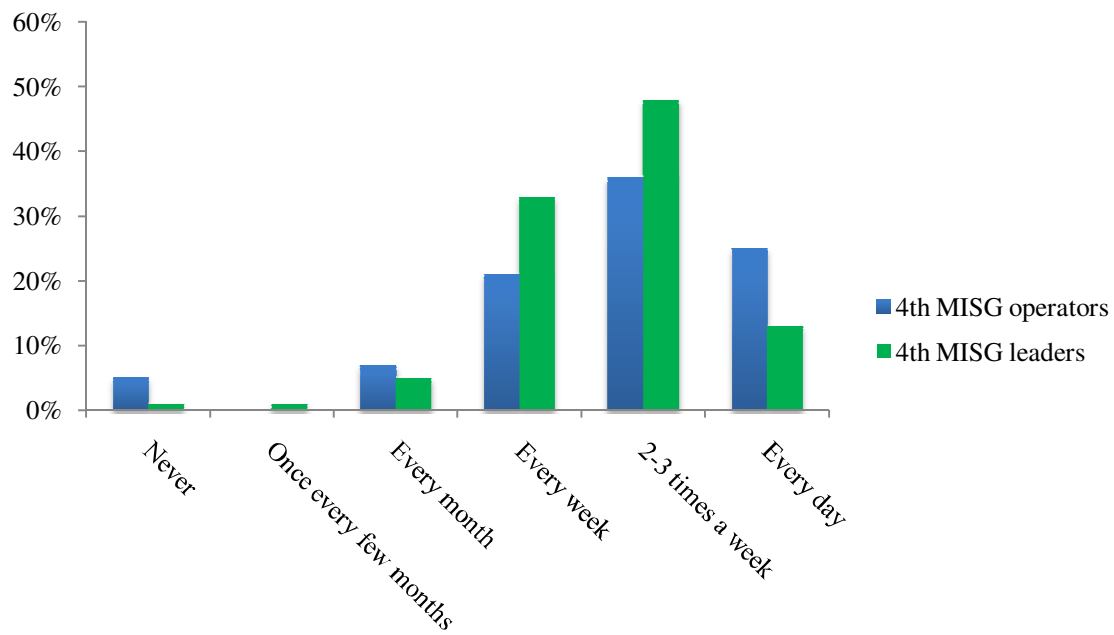
Note. The overall group consists of all USASOC leader responses. The question prompt for these items was “If all of the above barriers to acquiring and/or maintaining operators’ language proficiency were removed, how often would you encourage your operators to engage in acquisition and/or maintenance of language proficiency?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Once every few months*, 3 = *Every month*, 4 = *Every week*, 5 = *2-3 times a week*, 6 = *Every day*. USASOC units sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different barrier ratings. USASOC units NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different barrier ratings. Please refer to the mean to determine which group(s) provided higher or lower barrier ratings. Due to rounding error, rows may not add up to 100%. CA/MISG HQ is not presented due to small sample size ($n = 1$).

APPENDIX E: SURVEY RESPONSES FOR USASOC UNITS

Appendix E, Table 1. 4th MISG Responses

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	108	3.37	13%	11%	27%	24%	25%
	Leaders	88	3.98*	1%	14%	15%	27%	43%
Competing training requirements	Operators	107	3.24	17%	9%	29%	22%	22%
	Leaders	87	3.74*	5%	11%	23%	28%	33%
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	105	3.06	23%	12%	26%	14%	25%
	Leaders	88	3.23	18%	7%	30%	25%	20%
Lack of command support	Operators	106	2.46	34%	16%	26%	17%	7%
	Leaders	88	2.19	36%	26%	23%	11%	3%
Lack of personal interest	Operators	106	2.07	43%	23%	22%	8%	4%
	Leaders	88	2.43*	26%	27%	27%	16%	3%
Resource availability	Operators	106	2.10	35%	29%	29%	5%	2%
	Leaders	87	2.31	26%	29%	34%	8%	2%

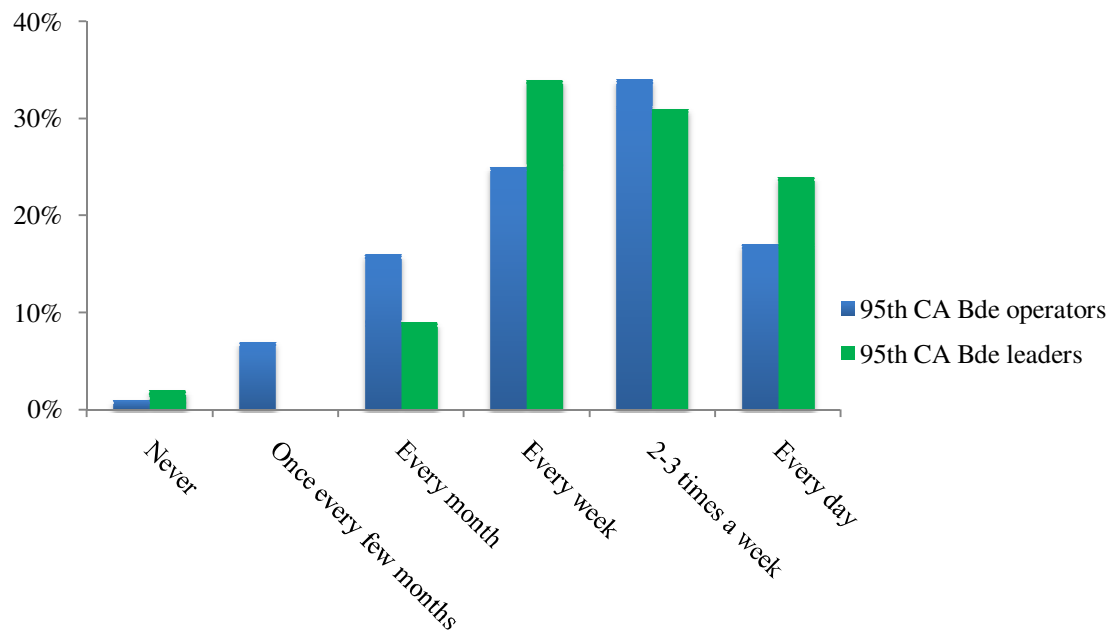
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 4th MISG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 4th MISG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 1. 4th MISG Responses





















































Appendix E, Table 2. 95th CA Bde Responses

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	135	3.92	9%	3%	22%	19%	47%
	Leaders	60	4.38*	0%	3%	8%	35%	53%
Competing training requirements	Operators	134	3.63	10%	4%	28%	28%	30%
	Leaders	60	4.10*	0%	12%	12%	32%	45%
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	133	3.41	14%	9%	28%	20%	29%
	Leaders	58	3.43	10%	16%	19%	31%	24%
Lack of command support	Operators	134	2.76*	21%	16%	40%	10%	12%
	Leaders	60	2.32	38%	18%	25%	10%	8%
Resource availability	Operators	134	2.47	23%	24%	40%	10%	3%
	Leaders	60	2.57	17%	32%	33%	15%	3%
Lack of personal interest	Operators	134	1.88	51%	18%	25%	4%	1%
	Leaders	59	2.14	31%	39%	22%	3%	5%

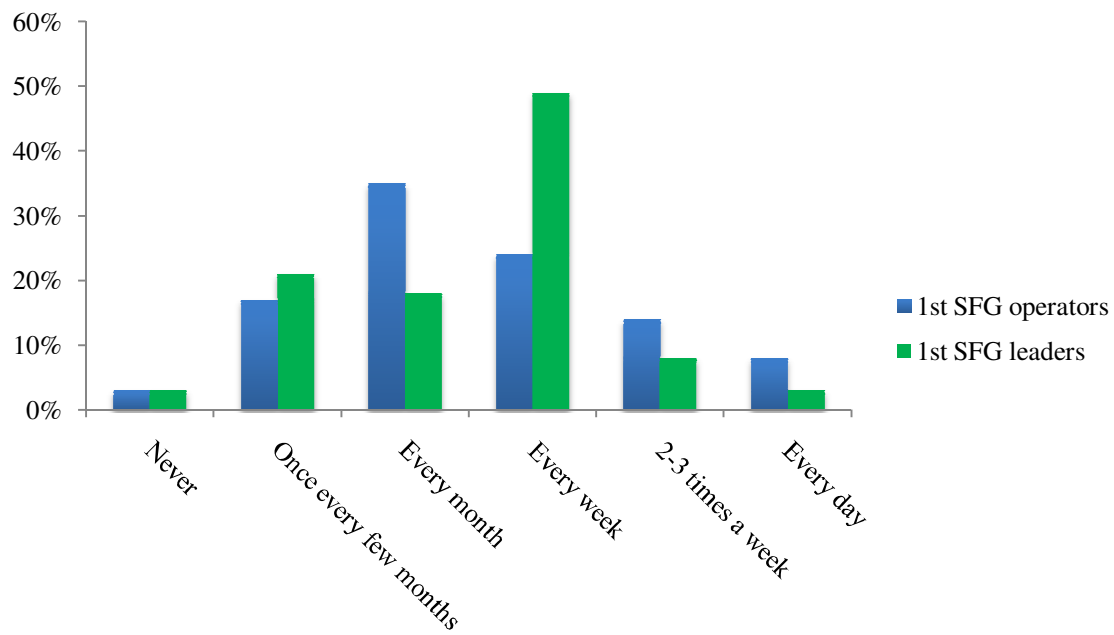
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 95th Bde operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 95th Bde operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 2. 95th CA Bde Responses

Appendix E, Table 3. 1st SFG Responses

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	65	4.05	29% 	14% 	40% 	11% 	6% 
	Leaders	39	4.67*	0% 	0% 	8% 	18% 	74% 
Competing training requirements	Operators	66	3.70	8% 	5% 	38% 	11% 	39% 
	Leaders	39	4.36*	0% 	0% 	18% 	28% 	54% 
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	65	3.51	11% 	11% 	28% 	18% 	32% 
	Leaders	39	3.77	5% 	5% 	31% 	26% 	33% 
Lack of command support	Operators	65	2.51	29% 	14% 	40% 	11% 	6% 
	Leaders	39	2.15	46% 	10% 	26% 	18% 	0% 
Lack of personal interest	Operators	65	2.14	42% 	14% 	37% 	5% 	3% 
	Leaders	39	2.46	18% 	31% 	41% 	8% 	3% 
Resource availability	Operators	66	2.11	47% 	9% 	33% 	8% 	3% 
	Leaders	39	2.00	49% 	18% 	21% 	10% 	3% 

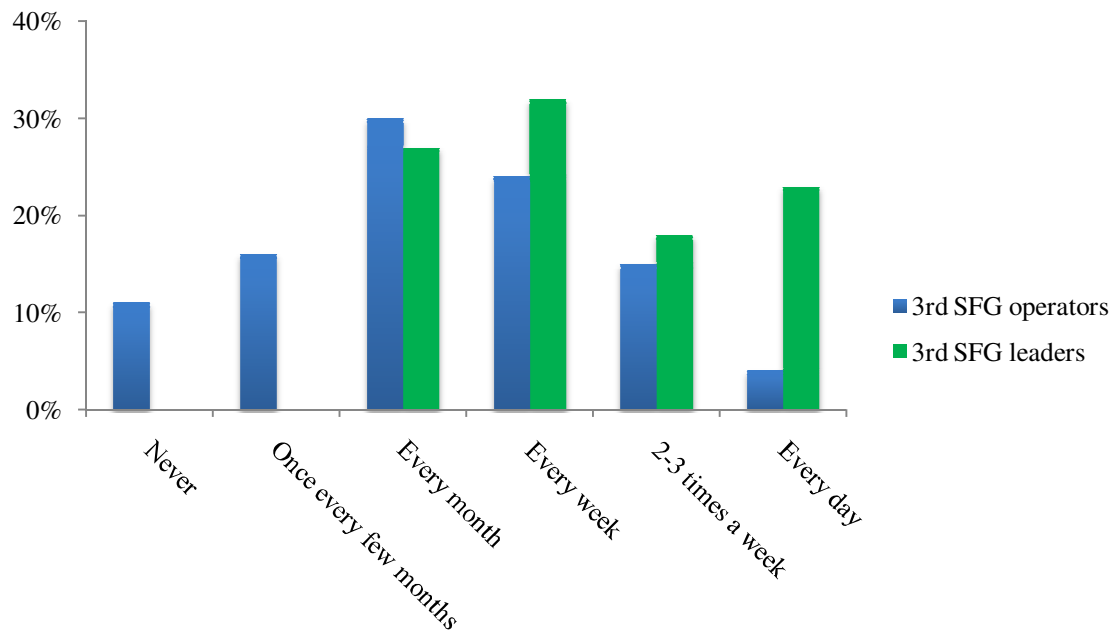
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 1st SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 1st SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 3. 1st SFG Responses


















































Appendix E, Table 4. 3rd SFG Responses

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTempo	Operators	79	3.90	6%	4%	28%	18%	44%
	Leaders	44	4.57*	2%	0%	9%	16%	73%
Competing training requirements	Operators	78	3.46	12%	9%	33%	14%	32%
	Leaders	44	4.14*	9%	14%	0%	23%	54%
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	79	2.99	20%	9%	42%	10%	19%
	Leaders	44	3.41	14%	14%	23%	18%	32%
Lack of personal interest	Operators	77	2.16	38%	22%	32%	3%	5%
	Leaders	44	2.46	25%	30%	30%	7%	9%
Resource availability	Operators	78	2.04	49%	13%	28%	6%	4%
	Leaders	44	2.25	30%	30%	30%	9%	2%
Lack of command support	Operators	79	2.11	51%	9%	28%	4%	9%
	Leaders	43	2.05	47%	21%	19%	9%	5%

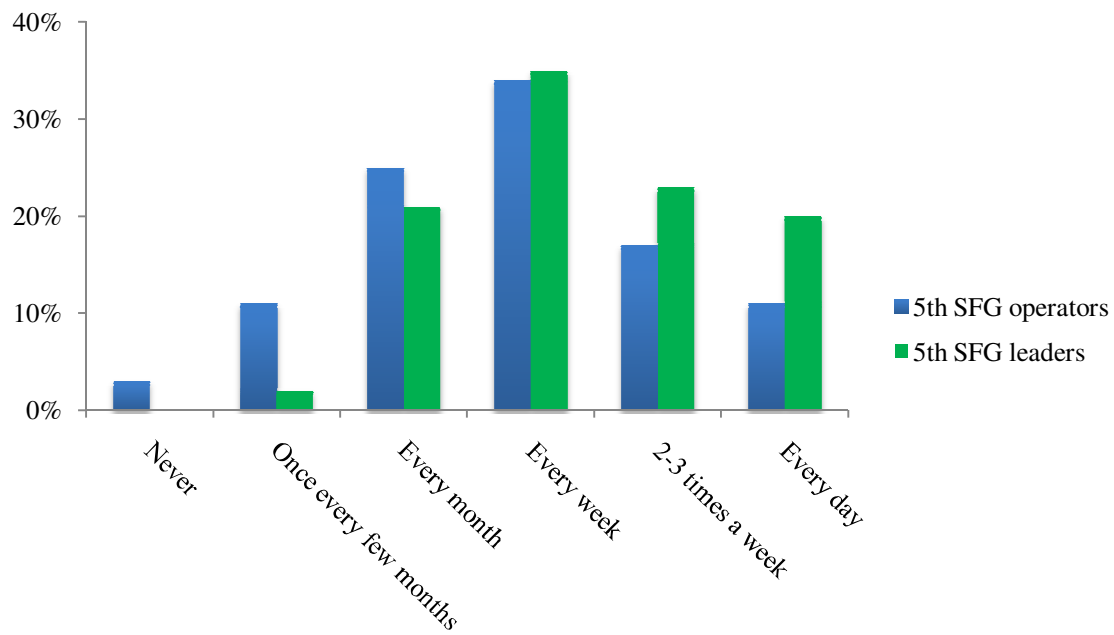
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 3rd SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 3rd SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 4. 3rd SFG Responses

Appendix E, Table 5. 5th SFG Responses

Item	Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	115	4.29	3% 	1% 	15% 	29% 	53% 
	Leaders	66	4.53	2% 	3% 	8% 	17% 	71% 
Competing training requirements	Operators	114	3.84	7% 	5% 	26% 	19% 	42% 
	Leaders	66	4.14	9% 	3% 	9% 	23% 	56% 
Lack of personal interest	Operators	114	2.04	41% 	23% 	29% 	5% 	2% 
	Leaders	66	2.73*	17% 	27% 	30% 	18% 	8% 
Lack of command support	Operators	112	2.30*	38% 	20% 	26% 	9% 	8% 
	Leaders	66	1.89	54% 	17% 	17% 	9% 	3% 
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	113	2.24*	48% 	11% 	20% 	12% 	9% 
	Leaders	66	1.77	56% 	26% 	8% 	6% 	5% 
Resource availability	Operators	114	1.82	56% 	16% 	19% 	8% 	1% 
	Leaders	66	1.97	44% 	24% 	24% 	6% 	2% 

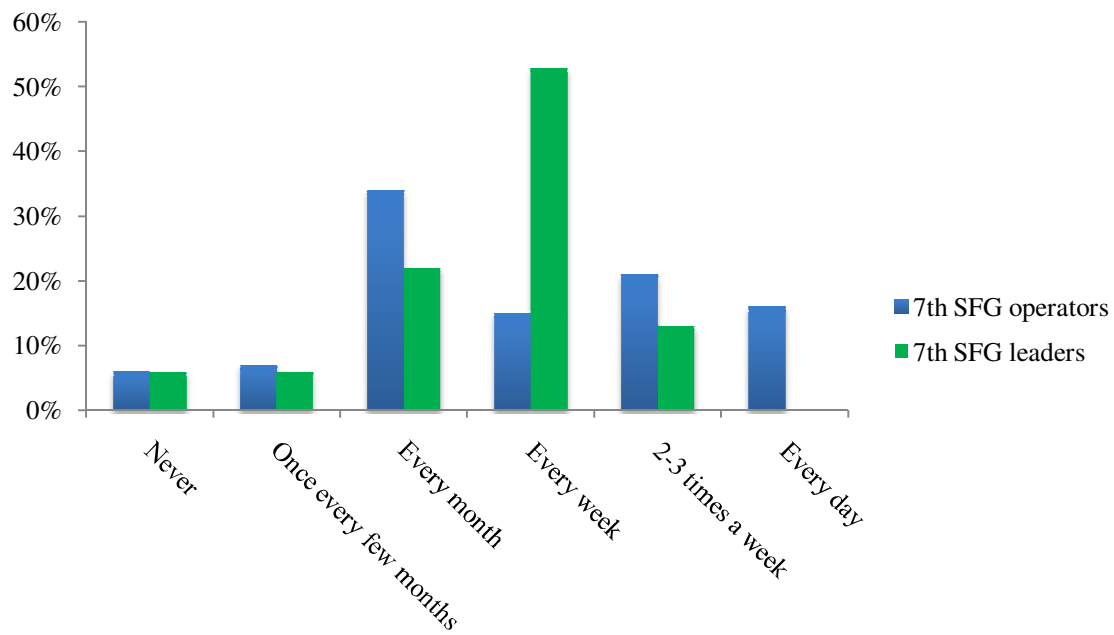
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 5th SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 5th SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 5. 5th SFG Responses







































































Appendix E, Table 6. 7th SFG Responses

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	85	3.75	9%	2%	26%	28%	34%
	Leaders	32	4.25	6%	3%	16%	9%	66%
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	85	3.68	7%	7%	28%	26%	32%
	Leaders	32	4.13	3%	3%	13%	41%	41%
Competing training requirements	Operators	84	3.02	18%	11%	39%	15%	17%
	Leaders	32	4.03*	3%	9%	13%	31%	44%
Lack of personal interest	Operators	84	2.60	43%	19%	30%	6%	2%
	Leaders	32	2.19	25%	38%	34%	0%	3%
Lack of command support	Operators	84	2.18	42%	13%	35%	7%	4%
	Leaders	31	1.97	48%	13%	32%	6%	0%
Resource availability	Operators	83	2.00	42%	18%	37%	2%	0%
	Leaders	32	1.97	44%	28%	19%	6%	3%

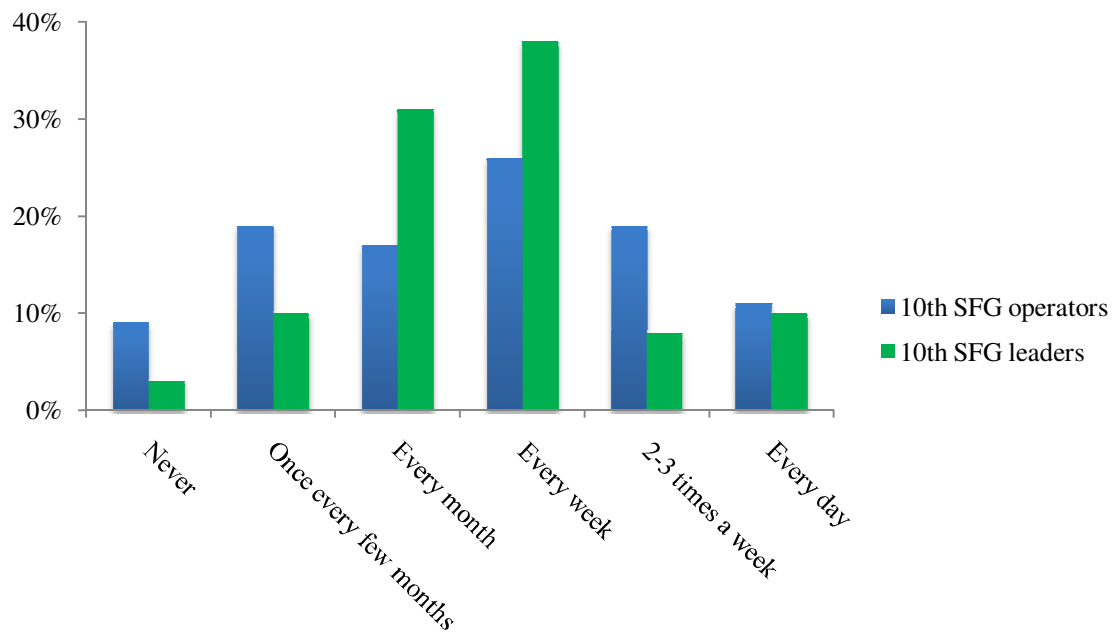
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 7th SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 7th SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 6. 7th SFG Responses

Appendix E, Table 7. 10th SFG Responses

Item	Group	n	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	46	4.09	2% 	2% 	22% 	33% 	41% 
	Leaders	39	4.51*	3% 	3% 	3% 	26% 	67% 
Competing training requirements	Operators	46	3.67	11% 	4% 	24% 	28% 	33% 
	Leaders	39	4.05	10% 	3% 	5% 	36% 	46% 
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	46	3.46	17% 	4% 	22% 	28% 	28% 
	Leaders	39	4.03	8% 	8% 	8% 	28% 	49% 
Lack of personal interest	Operators	46	2.00	48% 	22% 	20% 	4% 	7% 
	Leaders	39	2.51*	15% 	33% 	38% 	10% 	3% 
Lack of command support	Operators	46	2.52*	26% 	26% 	24% 	17% 	7% 
	Leaders	39	1.90	51% 	26% 	10% 	8% 	5% 
Resource availability	Operators	46	2.09	39% 	20% 	35% 	7% 	0% 
	Leaders	38	2.08	42% 	24% 	21% 	11% 	3% 
Lack of personal interest	Operators	46	2.00	48% 	22% 	20% 	4% 	7% 
	Leaders	39	2.51*	15% 	33% 	38% 	10% 	3% 

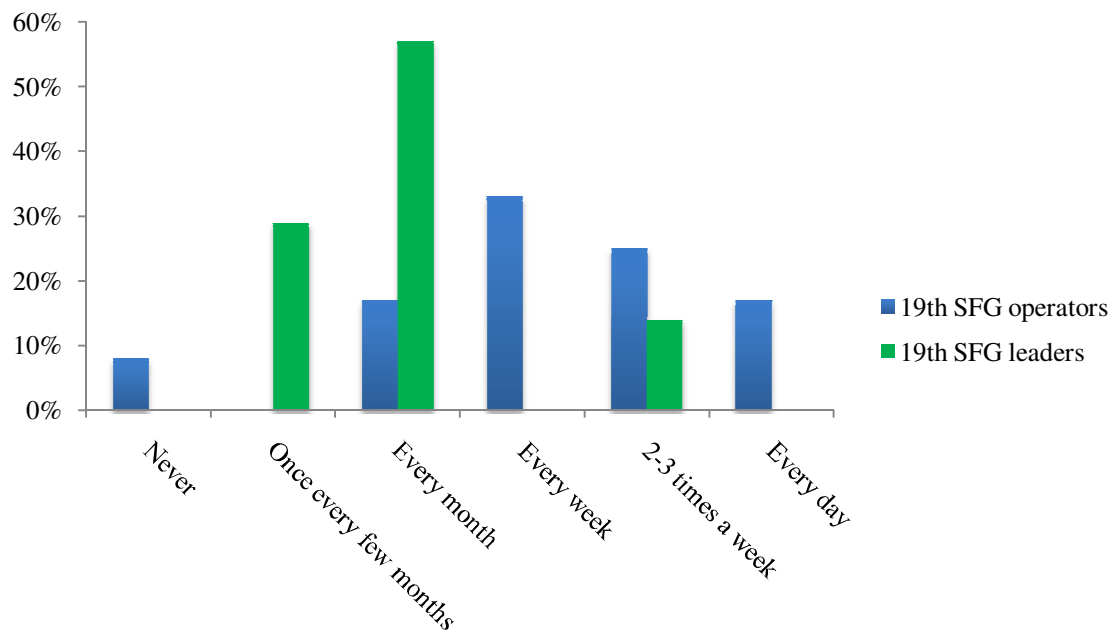
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 10th SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 10th SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 7. 10th SFG Responses









Appendix E, Table 8. 19th SFG Responses

Item	Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Competing training requirements	Operators	12	3.59	8%	8%	17%	50%	17%
	Leaders	6	4.33	0%	0%	17%	33%	50%
Time/OPTempo	Operators	12	3.42	8%	25%	17%	17%	33%
	Leaders	7	4.14	0%	0%	14%	57%	29%
Resource availability	Operators	12	3.33	0%	33%	25%	17%	25%
	Leaders	6	3.50	0%	17%	33%	33%	17%
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	12	2.75	17%	25%	25%	33%	0%
	Leaders	7	3.43	14%	14%	0%	57%	14%
Lack of command support	Operators	10	2.60	20%	30%	30%	10%	10%
	Leaders	6	2.83	17%	50%	0%	0%	33%
Lack of personal interest	Operators	12	1.75	58%	8%	33%	0%	0%
	Leaders	7	2.71	14%	29%	43%	0%	14%

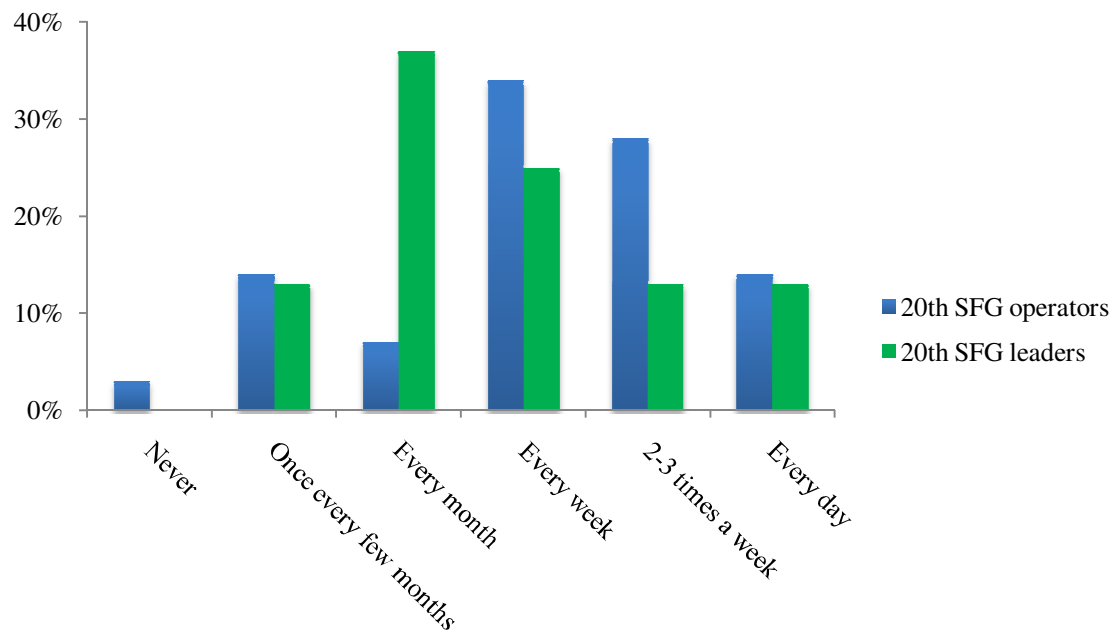
Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 19th SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 19th SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 8. 19th SFG Responses

Appendix E, Table 9. 20th SFG Responses

Item	Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Considerable Barrier	Extreme Barrier
Time/OPTEMPO	Operators	29	3.48	3% 	7% 	34% 	48% 	7% 
	Leaders	8	3.63	0% 	25% 	0% 	63% 	13% 
Competing training requirements	Operators	29	3.31	14% 	3% 	28% 	48% 	7% 
	Leaders	8	3.50	0% 	25% 	25% 	25% 	25% 
Resource availability	Operators	29	2.79	10% 	24% 	41% 	24% 	0% 
	Leaders	8	4.00*	0% 	13% 	13% 	37% 	37% 
Outside AOR deployments	Operators	28	2.79	21% 	14% 	36% 	21% 	7% 
	Leaders	8	3.13	0% 	38% 	25% 	25% 	12% 
Lack of command support	Operators	29	1.86	52% 	17% 	24% 	7% 	0% 
	Leaders	8	1.75	50% 	25% 	25% 	0% 	0% 
Lack of personal interest	Operators	28	1.61	64% 	11% 	25% 	0% 	0% 
	Leaders	8	2.00	50% 	13% 	25% 	12% 	0% 

Note. Items are in descending order by overall average across 20th SFG operators and leaders. The question prompt for SOF operators was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits your ability to acquire and/or maintain your current official or required AOR language or your primary/control language?” The question prompt for SOF leaders was “Which of the following potential barriers inhibits operators in your unit from acquiring and/or maintaining proficiency in their current official or required AOR language?” Respondents used the following response scale: 1 = *Not a barrier*, 2 = *Slight barrier*, 3 = *Moderate barrier*, 4 = *Considerable barrier*, 5 = *Extreme barrier*. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher barrier ratings (i.e., a statistically significant difference between 20th SFG operators and leaders). Due to rounding error, rows may not add to 100%.

Appendix E, Figure 9. 20th SFG Responses

APPENDIX F: COMMENT CODE DEFINITIONS

SOF operators and leaders provided comments in response to the following prompt: *Please provide any comments or recommendations you have on the barriers that interfere with or prevent development and/or maintenance of language capability [in your unit] (i.e., how would you remove them?).*

All comments were content analyzed and common themes extracted. The resulting themes are provided below, with a definition of each theme and verbatim exemplar comments that illustrate the theme. For more information about this study's content analysis process, please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

Note: Exemplar comments are presented verbatim and are uncorrected for spelling and other mistakes.

- Lack of Command Support
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding the lack of command's support of language negatively impacting SOF operators' ability to acquire or maintain language.
 - "LANGUAGE PRIORITY CHANGES WITH EVERY NEW CHAIN OF COMMAND. IT ALSO SEEMS MORE LIKE A CHECK THE BLOCK ON TRAINING REQUIREMENTS THAN ANYTHING ELSE"
 - "Only when the CoC determines that the effectiveness of the individuals being deployed is critical to the mission success, will they mandate language training and demand language proficiency."
 - "The only time language is important is when a slide on language abilities must be briefed to higher..."
 - "My biggest barriers were at the team level. The OIC and NCOIC were almost anti-language unless you were already highly skilled in languages. They did not encourage on duty learning."
- Time/OPTEMPO
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding time or high OPTEMPO negatively impacting SOF operators' ability to acquire or maintain language.
 - "Time is a limited resource. Time is the main roadblock. Please consider that its a zero sum game and that if more time is allocated to language, less time will have to be allocated to other requirements. We are already stressed and maxed out, no time for additional requirements without reducing some of the existing ones."
 - "Yeah, it's called OPTEMPO and it drives all other barriers to language training. Ask the hard questions about OPTEMPO - do we really need to be on each and every mission that's out there? Because right now, it seems like everyone just accepts the high OPTEMPO as reality, and no one is asking whether or not the current OPTEMPO is warranted."

- Competing Training Requirements or Other Distracters
 - Definition: This applies to comments discussing competing training requirements or taskings that negatively impact SOF operators' ability to acquire or maintain language.
 - "SFODAs have numerous training requirements that are not applicable but are a requirement for the Dept of the Army. In addition, SFODAs are tasked internally by their chain of command with numerous tasks and projects that do not support the mission of war fighting. Picking up pine cones, cleaning up post streets, etc is not the best use of an operators time. A SF BN can spend up to 18 months fenced by USASOC to perform tasking which takes priority over training. A SFODA can be tasked to provide support to this tasking cycle for numerous months, limiting the amount of time the teams spends in training. The amount of time a SFODA Operator spends on a detachment is 3 years and officers 18 months - 2 years, before having to move on to their next assignment. The turn over ratio is to rapid for a team to maintain its proficiency. Teams need to be tasked to maintain a standard and allowed the time to complete that mission critical task. After they achieve the standard then they can be tasked for other missions."
 - "The availability and emphasis of tedious work assignments over language training."
 - "Administrative taskers usually overshadow language training."
- Resource Availability (including lack of training opportunities such as immersion)
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding lack of resources negatively impacting SOF operators' ability to acquire or maintain language.
 - "There is emphasis across the board for language training. The problem is commitment of appropriate resources to support the emphasis."
- Outside AOR Deployments (e.g., not trained in deployment language)
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding outside AOR deployments negatively impacting SOF operators' ability to acquire or maintain their official or required AOR language.
 - "My language does not apply to the OIF or OEF theaters. Given the limited time I have in between deployments, I won't waste valuable training days studying my language."
 - "It is nearly impossible to maintain proficiency in my target language while preparing to deploy outside the PACOM AOR and attempt to learn a new language."
 - "While supporting OEF-A your language is put on hold to train for the deployment. However you should start learning arabic while training to ensure you have a foundation in that language."
- Lack of Incentive or Current Incentives not Achievable (e.g., FLPB proficiency standard)
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding lacking incentives or insufficient incentives to language acquisition and maintenance.

- “If you made language proficiency equal to say that of being Airborne people would care a lot more. Those who get paid should have to demonstrate the ability to use that language or lose their pay. By demonstrating ability that means more than just taking a test once a year (or more if you are deployed). Right now our battalion and 4th MISG as a whole doesn't care about language. Those who came from the pipeline are getting paid because they went to a more complete BMLC than my peers did in 2003. I can't change that, but I can improve my language and get paid with hard work. Only if I ask to go to language lab I get told I can't go. Where is the fairness in that?”
- Difficulty Learning Language
 - Definition: This applies to comments regarding the difficulty of learning a language negatively impacting SOF operators' ability to acquire or maintain their official or required language.
 - “I have a lack of ability and have had very little results from extensive efforts to improve my language ability”
- Suggestions for Removing Barriers
 - Definition: This applies to comments that provide suggestions for removing or reducing the barriers associated with language acquisition and maintenance.
 - “The command needs to place much more emphasis on language training and maintenance. Without a push from the top, most Soldiers will falter in their languages and the mission will be hurt. There is absolutely no way to do our job without being proficient in our languages.”
 - “Stick to the training schedule when it says “language maintenance ” and not schedule other things during those times. COC check on training like they would any other training.”
 - “Stop red cycle taskings. Manage deployment schedules to ensure ODAs have at least 6 weeks of unimpeded detachment level training time before every deployment. Teach a class to Senior SF Officers and staff that there is a "Green" in Red, Amber, Green training cycles. Include the definition of such cycles.”
- General Other Comments
 - Definition: This applies to comments that discuss barriers to language acquisition or maintenance that are not related to existing codes (includes reliance on interpreters; studying for test that is irrelevant to job; funding; language not important; no proficiency in AOR language on team).
 - “You have to spend so much time studying for a test (DLPT 5) that is irrelevant to your mission that you can't study what you really need.”
 - “DLPT is the only true barrier”
 - “Money for the schools is just not readily available.”